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Kirill Petrenko

The enigmatic conductor starts in Berlin

Season Preview

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SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Repast Baroque Ensemble

MSR F MS1661 (78' • DDD)



The Repast Baroque Ensemble members approached arranging Bach's *Goldberg Variations* by first singing through the score and then trying out various instrumental combinations.

Variations by first singing through the score and then trying out various instrumental combinations. They decided, however, not to touch the Aria, nor Variations 1, 5, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 28 and 29, leaving the solo harpsichord originals intact. Consequently, the end result lacks a sense of cumulative flow and underlying continuity, although individual movements contain imaginative strokes of instrumentation. In the French Overture (Var 16), for example, the bassoon and Baroque flute sonorities achieve an assiduous and witty blend that compensates for the harpsichord's less-than-assertive continuo function. By contrast, the continuo is more prominent in the lilting Var 7 (buoyed by subtle cello pizzicatos) and in the canon at the unison (Var 3), where Bach's close-lying imitative writing gains clarity by virtue of timbral distinctions between flute and violin.

Period-instrument cognoscenti will look upon the musicians' agogic phrasings and minuscule dynamic swells as stylish expressive devices, yet I find them to be fussy and predictable mannerisms that pull attention away from what's really going on in the music. Var 18, the canon at the sixth, is a particularly telling example of what I mean, where the choices regarding dynamics and articulations sound exaggerated and artificially imposed, and ultimately obscure the music's inherent conversational nature and rhythmic bounce. The musicians play Var 4's contrapuntal lines perfectly, yet lose sight of how Bach's syncopations propel the variation forwards. They also pull back and tiptoe around movements that cry out for rhythmic vigour and a natural dramatic build, as in the Quodlibet, Var 30.

GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Friction Quartet

The San Francisco-based quartet talk about 'Spark', their latest album of new music

How did you get to know the Common Sense Composers' Collective?

We first met Dan Becker, director of Common Sense, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He was the head of composition, and was a teacher of music history classes. Many members of Friction had taken classes or performed his students' works. He attended our first public performance and approached us about playing his piece *Lockdown*. We loved the work and decided to programme it. Eventually Dan started dreaming of a quartet album for Common Sense, and the trust we had built from previous collaborations led to us working on the album together.

Are there stylistic features that unify the works on this album?

The trait that most unifies this music is the exploration of sonic potential. And the most impressive element is that the composers did this with unique, authentic and inspired energy.



Indeed, the exploration of texture seems to be of central importance.

Yes, exactly. Texture is something that string quartets can highlight extremely well. And the composers of Common Sense all have a unique way of using that ability. Dan's piece *Lockdown* manipulates texture with propulsive interlocking hockets. Melissa Hui's work explores textures as a springboard for improvisation. Carolyn Yarnell's music explores the negative space, much like a bonsai tree. Randall Woolf's work unites electronics with the string quartet, extending the sonority into the warehouse dance hall. In the course of a single album you can experience almost the full gamut of what a string quartet is capable of.

Similarly, rhythm proves harpsichordist Gabe Shuford's undoing. His prosaic and low-energy playing deflates the giddy rush of Var 14's neo-Scarlatti runs and reduces Var 20's virtuoso scintillation to a dry, tensionless exercise. True, he favours sensitive registrations and subtle ornaments, yet so do dozens of stronger soloists who've recorded the *Goldbergs* on the harpsichord, including Mahan Esfahani (DG, 10/16) and Andreas Staier (Harmonia Mundi, 6/10) among recent favourites. MSR provides superbly detailed and lifelike engineering.

Jed Distler

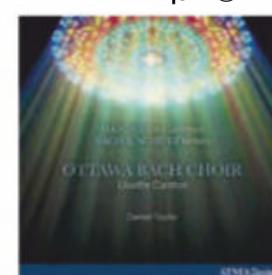
JS Bach · Handel · Schütz

JS Bach Komm, Jesu, komm, BWV229 Handel

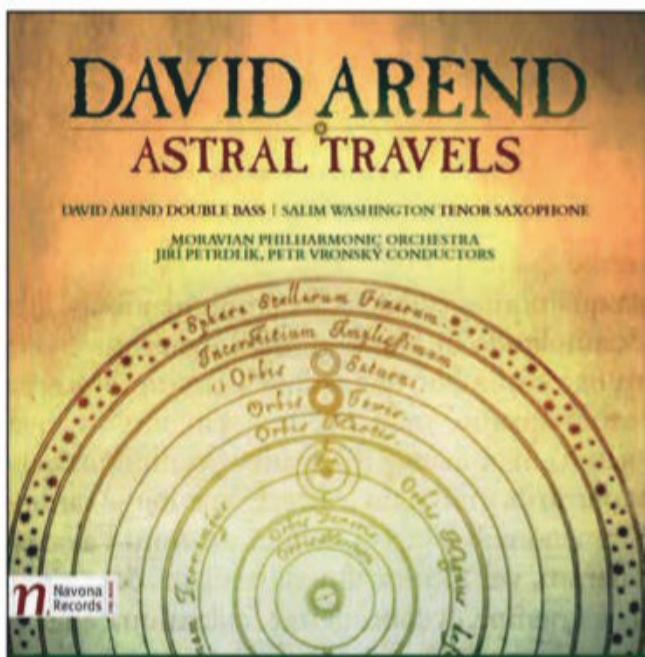
Dixit Dominus, HWV232 Schütz Calicem salutaris accipiam, SWV60. Ego enim inique egi, SWV58. Ego sum tui plaga doloris, SWV57. Quid commisisti, SWV56. Quo, nate Dei, SWV59

Daniel Taylor counterten Ottawa Bach Choir; Ensemble Caprice / Lisette Canton

ATMA Classique F ACD2 2790 (52' • DDD • T/t)



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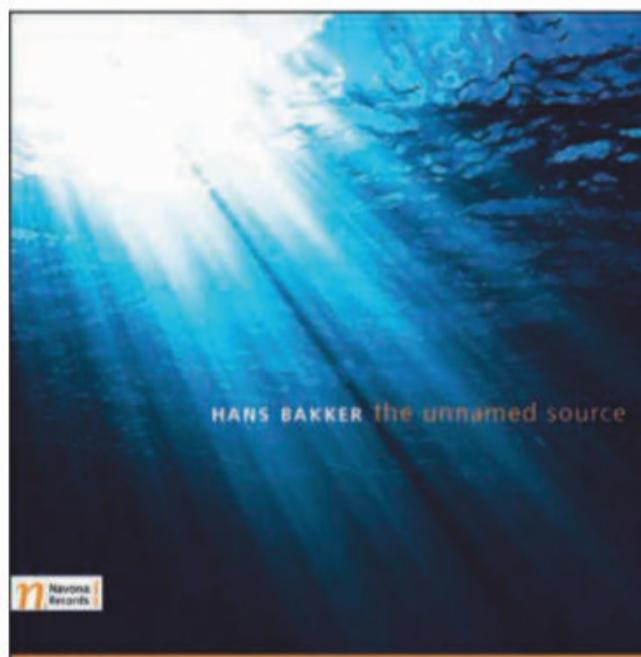
ASTRAL TRAVELS

DAVID AREND

With an innate curiosity and drive for knowledge, humans constantly push the boundaries of their environments to discover the unexpected. On his Navona Records release **ASTRAL TRAVELS**, composer and double bassist David Arend departs on sonic explorations along with tenor saxophonist Salim Washington and the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra. **NAVONA (NV6015)**

davidarend.com

navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6015



THE UNNAMED SOURCE

HANS BAKKER

Composer **Hans Bakker's THE UNNAMED SOURCE** invites listeners to become completely immersed in each moment of music. With the power of the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra at the helm, this Navona Records album provides feelings of truth and reality that shift perspectives and encourage listeners into a state of self-reflection. **NAVONA (NV5832)**

hansbakker.musicaneo.com

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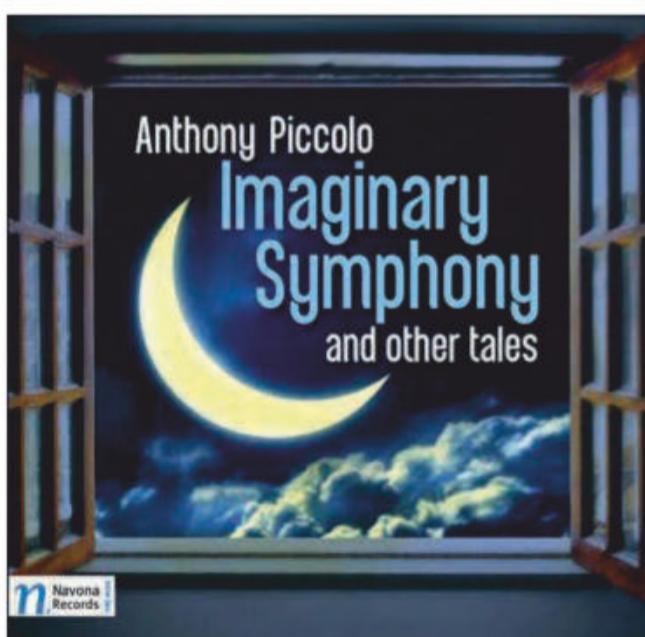
UNEXPLORED

NADA RADULOVICH

The exquisite pairing of piano and cello is on prominent display with **UNEXPLORED**, cellist and transcriber **Nada Radulovich's** Navona Records release. On the album, Radulovich is joined by acclaimed pianist Cullen Bryant in a program that highlights the works from some of the most renowned musicians of the 19th and 20th centuries. **NAVONA (NV6171)**

cellobynada.com

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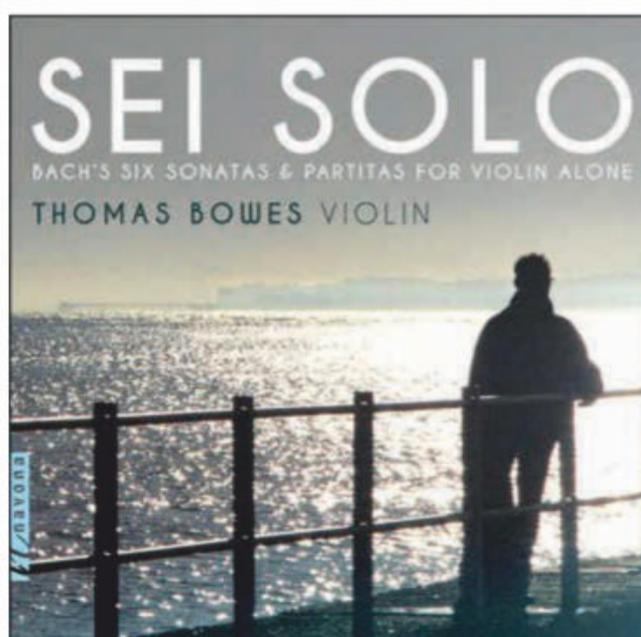
IMAGINARY SYMPHONY

ANTHONY PICCOLO

Anthony Piccolo leads a vibrant career as a composer, choral director, pianist and conductor. Drawing on decades of performing and composing experience, he crafts colorful scores in a variety of genres. The Navona Records album **IMAGINARY SYMPHONY AND OTHER TALES**, devoted entirely to his works, speaks to that craft. **NAVONA (NV5904)**

anthonypiccolo.com

navonarecords.com/catalog/nv5904



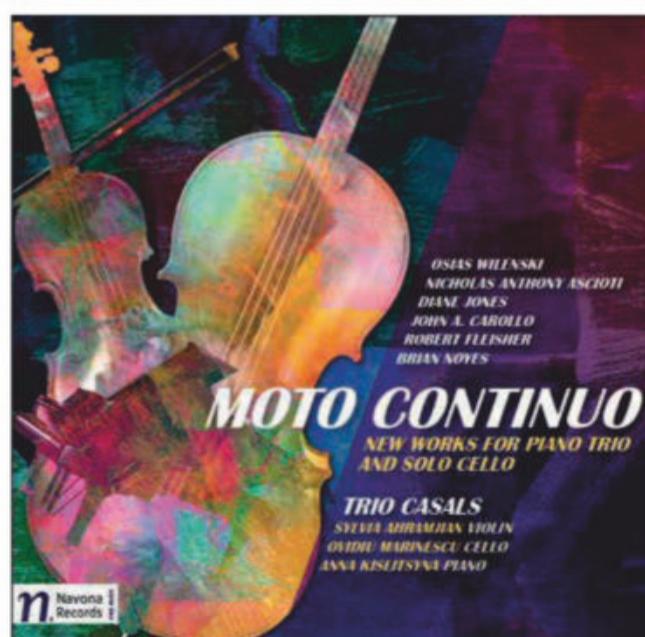
SEI SOLO

THOMAS BOWES VIOLIN

Thomas Bowes's Navona Records release **SEI SOLO** shines a light on six sonatas and partitas by Johann Sebastian Bach. Praised by Gramophone for his "genuinely spontaneous music making," the stand-alone compositions, while each individually offering insight into Bach's genius, play together as one epic piece that takes listeners within the music and within themselves. **NAVONA (NV6159)**

thomasbowes.com

navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6159



MOTO CONTINUO

Navona Records' **MOTO CONTINUO**, the second in its MOTO series, presents six new chamber works performed by the acclaimed **Trio Casals**. Praised as "ingenious" in *The Strad*, **Robert Fleisher's** *Ma mère* (for solo cello) deconstructs, reorders, and expands the cello parts from the middle movement of Debussy's orchestral masterwork, *La mer*. **NAVONA (NV6003)**

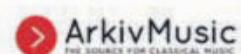
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One of the finest ensembles of their kind: the Jitro Czech Girls Choir bring joy to the music of Petr Eben

period ensembles, the Ottawa Bach Choir, conducted by founding director Lisette Canton, have combined with Matthias Maute's Ensemble Caprice from Montreal in eloquent, persuasive performances of Handel, Schütz and Bach. The two have teamed up before, most notably in 2016, when they played in Beijing and Shanghai, and this is reflected in how easily they move to the heart of the music's spiritual message, and how organically they integrate their HIP knowledge in order to communicate that message.

Their performance of Handel's *Dixit Dominus* also gets the young composer's precocious power and the passion of his utterances. From the exuberant, rigorous physicality of the opening chorus and the clear enunciation of the singing, the choir sing as if the words were actually being listened to and reflected upon by an engaged congregation.

The Canadian countertenor Daniel Taylor's sweet-toned singing of 'Virgam virtutis tuae' is one of a number of lovely vocal contributions, another being sopranos Kayla Ruiz and Kathleen Radka's exquisite 'De torrente in via bibet'. There is splendid instrumental work throughout, including Jean-Christophe Lisette's cello solo in the 'Virgam'. And the choir show their virtuosity and staying power in the fugue that concludes the 'Gloria Patri, et Filio'.

The Schütz songs are similarly vivid and engaged, but even so the grandeur of Bach's motet is staggering and movingly performed. The sound is captured splendidly by Montreal's own ATMA Classique label in the audiophile space of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Church in Ottawa.

Laurence Vittes

Eben

'In Heaven'

Liturgical Chants. Choruses on Latin Texts. Catonis moralia. Ten Poetic Duets. About Swallows and Girls

Jitro Czech Girls Choir / Jiří Skopal

Navona Ⓛ NV6228 (56' • DDD)

Recorded 1995-2007

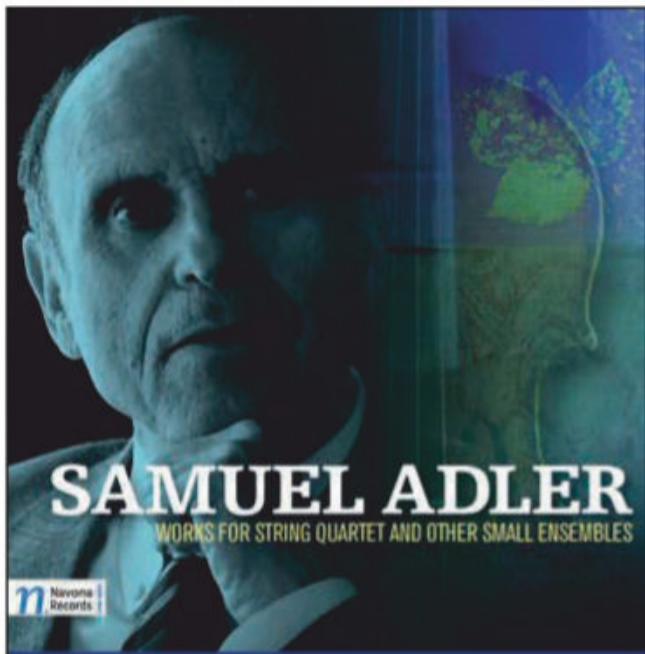


An entire disc running close to an hour devoted to pieces for girls' chorus, either *a cappella* or accompanied by piano or organ, might seem like too much of a good thing. When the pieces are by Petr Eben (1929-2007), however, this is resoundingly not the case. The five rather appealing sets of choral songs gathered on this nicely produced disc are diverse in character, mixing the sacred and the secular, setting either Latin (*Catonis moralia*, *Choruses on Latin Texts*, *Liturgical Chants*) or Czech (*About Swallows and Girls*, *Poetic Duets*).

Latin Texts, Liturgical Chants) or Czech (*About Swallows and Girls, Poetic Duets*).

Eben would have celebrated his 90th birthday this year and is still best remembered as a formidable organist and composer for his instrument, yet his output of vocal and choral music is extensive and impressive. The *Liturgical Chants* (1960) are part of a sequence of sacred works published in several volumes from 1955, the present set comprising an *Introitus*, *Graduale*, *Evangelium*, *Offertorium* and *Communio* built around Psalm 29. The music, as in all these pieces, is stylish without seeming so, the brightness of the girls' voices at odds with the gravity of the texts, yet it all works very nicely. The same is true of the *Choruses on Latin Texts* (1973; it is not explained why only the first three are given here) and *Catonis moralia* (1974-75), the latter setting third-century texts based on Cato, the five movements structured like a Baroque suite.

The Jitro Girls Choir are one of the finest ensembles of the kind and their performances are delightful throughout, a testament to Jiří Skopal's firm direction. The two early-ish Czech-language cycles, the *Ten Poetic Duets* (1965, with piano accompaniment) and *About Swallows and Girls* (1959-60) bring out their most joyful singing, caught in bright if unspectacular sound. **Guy Rickards**



SAMUEL ADLER

WORKS FOR STRING QUARTET AND OTHER SMALL ENSEMBLES

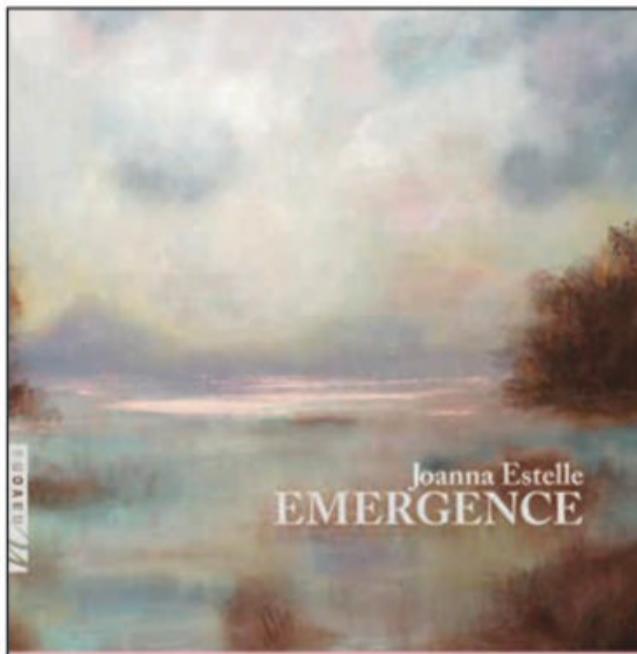


WORKS FOR STRING QUARTET AND OTHER SMALL ENSEMBLES SAMUEL ADLER

Navona Records' **WORKS FOR STRING QUARTET AND OTHER SMALL ENSEMBLES** brings three albums from composer **Samuel Adler** into one. Originally released in the 1990s, this music serves as a sampling of the composer's artistic output, highlighting his talent for expressing an array of thoughts and emotions. **NAVONA (NV5885)**

samueladler.com

navonarecords.com/catalog/nv5885

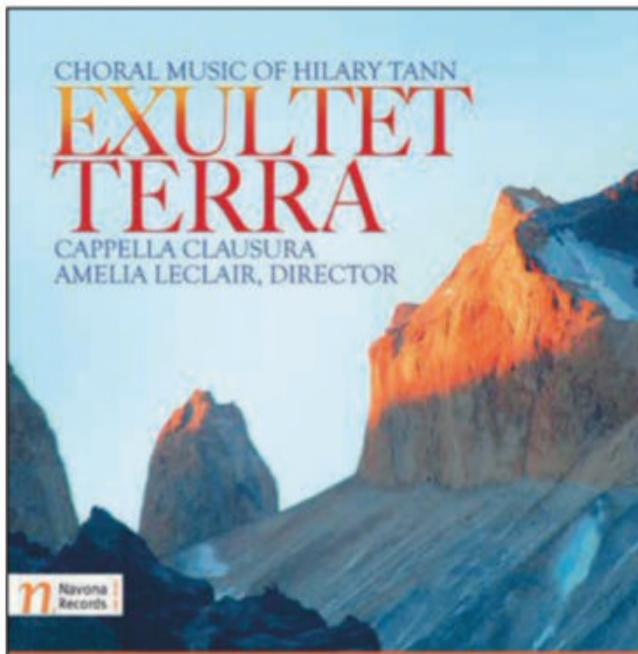


EMERGENCE JOANNA ESTELLE

Accomplished composer, arranger, and lyricist **Joanna Estelle** presents Navona Records' **EMERGENCE**, a compilation of works produced under her personal philosophy that "quality music uplifts humankind." Each piece of original music presents the musical journey of this prolific composer. **NAVONA (NV6161)**

joannaestelle.com

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CHORAL MUSIC OF HILARY TANN

EXULTET TERRA

CAPPELLA CLAUSURA
AMELIA LECLAIR, DIRECTOR



EXULTET TERRA AMELIA LECLAIR, CAPPELLA CLAUSURA

Navona Records' **EXULTET TERRA** is a presentation of choral works comprised of both a cappella pieces and compositions for voice, featuring a double reed quintet. With the inspired choral music of **Hilary Tann** and captivating performances of **Cappella Clausura** under the able direction of **Amy LeClair**, this collaboration is supremely beautiful and unique. **NAVONA (NV6069)**

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CENTURIA S-QUARK SYMPHONY STAS NAMIN



LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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CENTURIA S-QUARK SYMPHONY STAS NAMIN

For composer and legendary Russian musician **Stas Namin**, the world's current state suggests a dark, violent future, as humanity turns from collective to individual minds. The cosmic cycle of breaking down and rebuilding is brought to life in **CENTURIA S-QUARK** through the power of the London Symphony Orchestra. **NAVONA (NV6200)**

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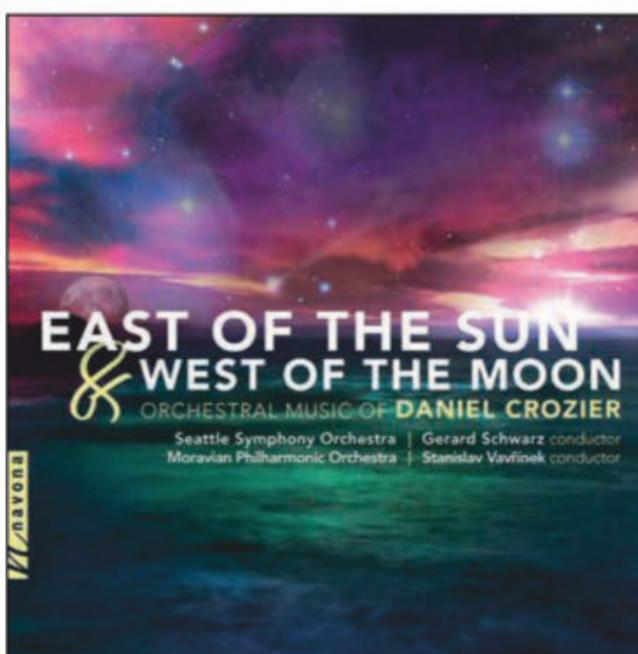


HORIZON SUNSET #BLOOMERANGS

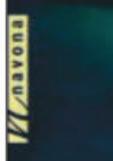
HORIZON SUNSET, a Big Round Records album from international music collective **#Bloomerangs**, offers works by composer, arranger, producer, and guitarist **Rodrigo Cotelo**. **HORIZON SUNSET** features a diverse array of sounds and instruments, often with guest artists playing with the dynamic core performers of **#Bloomerangs**. **BIG ROUND (BR8947)**

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EAST OF THE SUN & WEST OF THE MOON ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OF DANIEL CROZIER



Seattle Symphony Orchestra | Gerard Schwarz conductor

Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra | Stanislav Vavřinek conductor

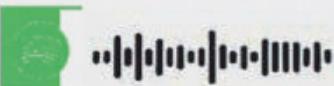
EAST OF THE SUN & WEST OF THE MOON DANIEL CROZIER

Using music, rather than words, to tell his story, composer **Daniel Crozier's** album is full of startling detail and narrative. With his Navona Records release, **EAST OF THE SUN & WEST OF THE MOON**, listeners are hard-pressed to find a better narrative voice than the delicate oboe positioned against the profound strings of the orchestra. **NAVONA (NV6137)**

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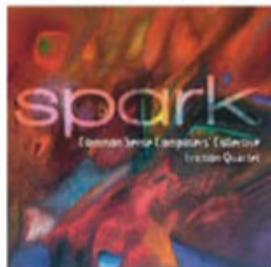


'Spark'

Becker Lockdown Halle Sphere's Harsh Trill
Hui Map of Reality Mellits String Quartet No 3,
 'Tapas' - Five Reynolds Open R Woolf No Luck,
 No Happiness Yarnell Monographs

Friction Quartet

Innova F INNOVA024 (67' • DDD)



Since 1993 the Common Sense Composers' Collective has

created more than 70 new works, released four albums and produced five new-music marathons in the San Francisco Bay Area. The music on its new CD was developed in collaboration with the Afiara and Cecilia Quartets, before being taken up by the Oakland-

based Friction Quartet, and the disc comes with an essay by Richard Taruskin spinning fabulous metamusical fantasies.

The opening gentle beauties of Marc Mellits's 'Five', suggesting Dvořák and Janáček in a roundabout way, are followed by Dan Becker's film noir *Lockdown* power grid, then John Halle's delirious homage to Thelonious Monk in which a metric pulse in the background holds together a swirling series of polyrhythmic phrases.

Melissa Hui's *Map of Reality* is a series of intriguing snippets and textures crafted as if they were pieces of visual art. Notated in prose descriptions 'somewhat amplified by rhythmic symbols', the results are in part left up to the performers. The second movement of five is particularly beguiling with its mewing ascending and descending sighs,

while the finale is hauntingly beautiful, with a variety of bowed and plucked effects. Belinda Reynolds's *Open* is similarly focused and addictive, though it stirs itself briefly into action towards the end.

The contrasts in mood and style continue with Ed Harsh's ferocious *Trill*, which is ambushed brilliantly by Bartókian accents at the end. 'Hiko', the first of Carolyn Yarnell's two *Monographs*, is six minutes of perhaps not-so-random plucks amid uncertain silences. Her 'Angel on a Bridge' is just plain good-natured, after which Randall Woolf's *No Luck, No Happiness* makes franken-Baroque noises that will make listeners understand why Stravinsky hated Vivaldi and HC Robbins Landon called for a pox on Manfredini.

Laurence Vittes

The John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC

Our monthly guide to North American venues

Year opened 1971

Architect Edward Durrell Stone

Capacity Concert Hall: 2465; Opera House: 2362;

Eisenhower Theater: 1164

Resident Ensembles National Symphony Orchestra, Washington

National Opera

The Kennedy Center officially opened its doors on September 8, 1971, with the premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. Unlike New York's Lincoln Center (opened in 1962), with its separate constituent buildings designed by various architects, all the venues of the Kennedy Center are housed under one roof, designed by the architect Edward Durrell Stone. Cyril M Harris designed the auditoria and acoustics. The building is imposing: 100 feet high, 630 feet long and 300 feet wide, it occupies a prominent site on the Potomac River, with commanding views from its upper level terrace. 3700 tons of Carrara marble, a gift from the government of Italy, were used in its construction.

Both the location and design of the Kennedy Center have garnered criticism. It is not readily accessible from any stop of the DC Metro, and one architectural critic described the structure as 'gemütlich Speer'. Certainly the sheer monumentality of the Kennedy Center can overwhelm the visitor. But no one could argue that Washington's performing arts centre failed to fulfil a longstanding need. Before the Kennedy Center, the US capital had historically suffered, with a few exceptions, from a dearth of spaces appropriate for music.

Three large halls occupy the Center's ground level. The 1164-seat Eisenhower Theater hosts plays, musicals and contemporary dance. The Opera House, seating 2362, is the permanent home of Washington National Opera and the annual Kennedy Center



honours, as well as the preferred venue for ballet companies and Broadway musicals. The largest is the Concert Hall, with 2465 seats, the permanent home of the National Symphony Orchestra and hosting popular music concerts. All share a common lobby, the Grand Foyer, one of the largest rooms in the world, which has as its centrepiece the giant portrait bust of President Kennedy by Robert Berks. At each end of the Grand Foyer are the stages of Millennium Stage, where free events are offered to the public daily.

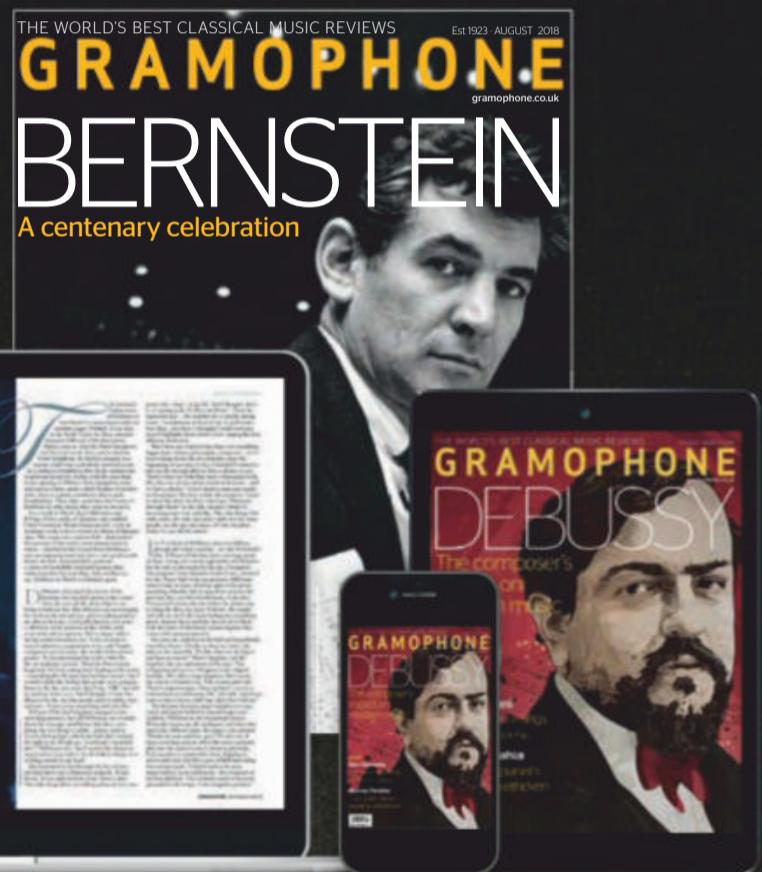
The 324-seat Kennedy Center Family Theater is the site of productions for young audiences. The recently refurbished Terrace Theater seats 513 for chamber music, recitals, dance and theatre. Plays and lectures are presented in the Kennedy Center Theater Lab, with its semi-circular thrust stage and seating for 398. The KC Jazz Club is used for performances in a relaxed cabaret setting.

This September the Center will unveil an expansion on four acres of the building's south plaza. Classrooms and rehearsal and performance spaces will be available, as well as three pavilions, a reflecting pool, a grove and a sloping lawn for outdoor performances. **Patrick Rucker**

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Pictured: Violinist Janine Jansen (DECCA / © Marco Borggreve) who featured on the January 2016 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is \$142.87; print only annual subscription or Digital Edition or Reviews Database (\$101); Digital Club (\$134); Gramophone Club (\$167). If choosing a print option, an additional overseas P+P charge will be added at \$35.75 (Outside EU).
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A LETTER FROM *Dallas*

Scott Cantrell reports on the richly varied musical offerings in his Texas home town

Few people outside what's been dubbed the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex realise that it's the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the United States. With more than 7.5 million residents and a healthily diversified economy, it's also one of the fastest-growing.

Visitors are also surprised to learn that Dallas's downtown Arts District has some of the finest performing-arts facilities anywhere, designed by distinguished architects, with excellent – and effectively adjustable – acoustics. The Meyerson Symphony Center, the only concert hall designed by the late IM Pei, with lush acoustics by the late Russell Johnson and his Artec Consultants, celebrates its 30th birthday this autumn. Adjacent are the 10-year-old Winspear Opera House, by Foster + Partners (Bob Esett, acoustician), and the 750-seat Moody Performance Hall, by the Chicago office of SOM (with acoustician Mark Holden), opened in 2012. The district also includes the multiform Wyly Theatre, by Rex/OMA (Joshua Prince-Ramos with Rem Koolhaas), Booker T Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Nasher Sculpture Center and the Crow Museum of Asian Art.

To watch the area's arts scene over the last 20 years has been to marvel at new facilities, but also at the artistic progress of performing groups. It says something about the dramatic advancement of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra under music director Jaap van Zweden, from 2008 to 2018, that the Dutch conductor was snatched up by the New York Philharmonic. He'll be succeeded by Fabio Luisi, whose European commitments are requiring a gradual takeover. Luisi will conduct five concerts in 2019-20 and seven the following season before taking full possession of the orchestra. Already, programming for the 2019-20 season looks considerably more interesting than any other in memory.

The Dallas Opera has had its ups and downs in the last 20 years but seems poised for an upswing under the experienced Ian Derrer, who took over as general director and CEO in summer 2018. The French conductor Emmanuel Villaume continues as music director.

In Fort Worth, 35 miles west of downtown Dallas, Miguel Harth-Bedoya has transformed the formerly rough-hewn Fort Worth Symphony into an accomplished ensemble and programmed far more daringly than his Dallas counterparts. In an area with a huge Latino population, the Peruvian-born conductor has programmed numerous works by Latin American composers and hired a succession of Latin American assistant conductors. But after 20 years in charge, he steps down at the end of 2019-20. This is an orchestra ripe for greater interpretative cultivation; one hopes the right conductor is picked to take it to the next stage.

The FWSO plays in the 21-year-old Bass Performance Hall, a multi-purpose facility designed by David M Schwarz in a retardataire style mingling everything from Viennese Secession to art deco, with giant Jello-mould trumpeting angels on the

facade. Acoustics, by Paul Scarbrough, can be adjusted for excellent results with orchestra as well as opera and even solo piano. The hall is also the site of the quadrennial Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, whose sponsoring foundation presents main-season concerts there and at the Kimbell Art Museum and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Fort Worth Opera presents mainstage productions at Bass and smaller-scale works in a variety of alternative venues.

Fort Worth Opera was an artistic, administrative and financial mess when Darren K Woods took over as general director in 2001. In 16 years he dramatically improved vocal and theatrical standards and attracted national attention with a series of world premieres and other new and often provocative operas. But he and the board came to a parting of ways in 2017, and the company hired Tuomas

Hiltunen, who'd never run an opera company, as his successor. Music director Joe Illick was promoted to the position of artistic director.

The company has cut back

productions and still seems to be finding its way.

Both the Dallas Opera and Dallas Symphony have inaugurated bold new programmes to cultivate and promote female conductors, who, despite larger numbers coming out of conservatory conducting programmes, still face career obstacles. Established in 2016, the opera company's Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors each year selects six main participants, and additional observers, for coaching conducting and rehearsal techniques, plus sessions on career development and other concerns. They rehearse with professional singers and the Dallas Opera Orchestra, and conduct in a public concert at the end of the two-week institute. Among the leaders is Nicole Paiement, the company's principal guest conductor since 2014.

Overlapping with the Hart Institute, the DSO will inaugurate its own Women in Classical Music Symposium in November. It will include no performance opportunities but will offer workshops and panel discussions on career issues. Participants will attend open rehearsals and a concert led by the DSO's new principal guest conductor, Gemma New, from New Zealand. Four other women are scheduled as guest conductors in 2019-20. The DSO has had an impressive history of hiring female assistant conductors, but New is the first female principal guest, in a programme planned to appoint a succession of women to that post. A composer-in-residence programme to promote women began with the 2018 appointment of Julia Wolfe.

Leading the DSO's new initiatives is president and CEO Kim Noltemy, who arrived at 2018 with an impressive résumé from the Boston Symphony. Keith Cerny, who preceded Derrer at the Dallas Opera, now heads the Fort Worth Symphony – and its search for a new music director. With so much new leadership in the area's leading orchestras and opera companies, stay tuned for more changes and new initiatives. **G**



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When music for the silver screen strikes gold

Where film music sits in relation to classical music is not always clear-cut. Is it just ultra-programmatic orchestral music? Does its association with what's happening on screen constrain or enrich it? Does it – can it – stand alone in its own right? The answer, of course, is that it depends on the score; like all music, some of it will be brilliant, some not so much.

What is clear is that those who dismiss movie music as something separate, lesser even, are not only ignoring its often extraordinary creative power, but also denying themselves some really rewarding musical experiences. And now we have Anne-Sophie Mutter, one of our age's greatest violin virtuosos, telling us so.

Our columnist, Edward Seckerson, recalls this month how, as a child discovering music, he met with parental disapproval that his film score purchases would sit alongside core symphonic repertoire. Undaunted, he now represents one of those enlightened reviewers whose catholicity of taste is only restricted by whether or not something is good: musicals, movie scores and Mahler rightly vie for his shelf space. (That he cites Leonard Bernstein as his musical hero is no surprise.)

And Seckerson is not alone: many artists and concert-goers see no reason why they can't enjoy both Brahms and, say, the LSO in full intergalactic flight performing a John Williams score – something I'm sure the orchestra's legendary Principal Trumpet Maurice Murphy, who can be heard prominently on the soundtracks of some of the most successful films in cinematic history, would have heartily agreed with.



As would Anne-Sophie Mutter. When, for our cover story, a soloist of her stature talks with as much passion for John Williams as for Penderecki and Thomas Adès, it's only right to take her argument, and the music itself, seriously. And, to cite another example, it's only a few months since Riccardo Chailly was praising Nino Rota's music for Fellini's films in our pages, describing one particular score as 'an incredible universe of sound, from semi-Baroque music with a harpsichord in the orchestra, up to almost a quotation from *The Rite of Spring*'.

Of course, the place of film music within classical composition is complex: Shostakovich, Walton and Korngold all wrote for both concert hall and silver screen; it's only recently that the compartmentalisation of composers has become, with a few notable exceptions, so acute. However, the craft and inventiveness of film-focused figures such as Williams, or Morricone, is worth celebrating in its own right.

Finally, film music can offer an amazing opportunity for the classical world in simply showing vast numbers of people what a symphony orchestra sounds like. Many orchestras incorporate film music concerts into their programmes, and that's aside from the 'pops' concerts which, particularly in America, have long played such a key role in the summer season. All of which strengthens the message that film scores are not meant to be background music – they're an intrinsic, emotionally shaping element of a film. Initiatives such as these, and advocacy by the likes of Mutter and others, deservedly puts the genre centre stage.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



NEIL FISHER
found meeting
Anne-Sophie
Mutter to be
a revealing
experience. "Are
you a soloist or

a musician who sees the entire cosmos?" I'd assumed she stood more in the first camp. But it was she who posed the question and, as her new album proves, she has her eyes on the whole musical universe.'



'Kirill Petrenko is
an elusive and
interview-shy
maestro,' admits
HUGO SHIRLEY,
who writes our
profile piece this

issue, 'but speaking to musicians
who have worked with him helped
me to build an intriguing picture of
what sort of a conductor he is and
what his new reign at the Berlin
Philharmonic might bring.'



'It was fascinating
to talk to
Benjamin
Wallfisch
about his
film-composing
process,' says
JAMES MCCARTHY, author of this

month's feature on film music.
'Thanks to technological advances,
the film composer's craft continues
to evolve; it's a hugely exciting and
rewarding industry to be part of.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Tim Ashley • Mike Ashman • Michelle Assay
Richard Bratby • Edward Breen • Liam Cagney • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer)
Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows
David Fanning • Andrew Farach-Colton • Iain Fenlon • Neil Fisher • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood
Charlotte Gardner • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence
Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Hannah Nepilova • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol
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Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Patrick Rucker • Edward Seckerson • Mark Seow • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn
Harriet Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse
Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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EDITORIAL

Phone 020 7738 5454 Fax 020 7733 2325
email gramophone@markallengroup.com
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford
DEPUTY EDITOR Sarah Kirkup / 020 7501 6365
REVIEWS EDITOR Tim Parry / 020 7501 6367
ONLINE CONTENT EDITOR James McCarthy
SUB-EDITOR David Thresher / 020 7501 6370
SUB-EDITOR Marija Durić Speare
ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone / 020 7501 6689
PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson
AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee
THANKS TO Charlotte Gardner, Hannah Nepilova and Jennifer Tucker
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly

ADVERTISING

Phone 020 7738 5454 Fax 020 7733 2325
email gramophone.ads@markallengroup.com

COMMERCIAL MANAGER

Esther Zuke / 020 7501 6368

SALES EXECUTIVE

Samuel Desborough / 020 7501 6373

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

0800 137201 (UK) +44 (0)1722 716997 (overseas)
subscriptions@markallengroup.com

PUBLISHING

Phone 020 7738 5454

HEAD OF MARKETING AND DIGITAL STRATEGY

Luca Da Rè / 020 7501 6362

MARKETING MANAGER

John Barnett / 020 7501 6233

MARKETING EXECUTIVE

Hayley Sigrist / 020 7738 6459

GROUP INSTITUTIONAL SALES MANAGER

Jas Atwal

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Richard Hamshere / 01722 716997

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Jon Redmayne

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

Sally Boettcher / 01722 716997

SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER

Chris Hoskins / 01722 716997

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Martin Cullingford

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

Paul Geoghegan

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Ben Allen

CHAIRMAN

Mark Allen



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Jaap van Zweden
Music Director

GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice G

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



GRIEG Lyric Pieces

MENDELSSOHN Songs without Words

Denis Kozhukhin *pf*

Pentatone

► **MICHELLE ASSAY'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 48**

A beautifully played, personal selection of piano miniatures from Denis Kozhukhin touchingly captures the poetic nature of the form – that immediate summoning of a single emotion or mood.



MAHLER

Symphony No 4
Sofia Fomina *sop* London Philharmonic Orchestra /
Vladimir Jurowski
LPO

Vladimir Jurowski brings real attention to detail, Mahler's ideas brought out with compelling clarity. Excellent playing throughout from the LPO.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 56**



PROKOFIEV. TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Concertos
Haochen Zhang *pf* Lahti
Symphony Orchestra /
Dima Slobodeniouk
BIS

Haochen Zhang – a Van Cliburn winner – performs these works with imaginative command of their required virtuosity.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**



HOLLIGER. KURTÁG

Zwiegespräche
Heinz Holliger *ob* et al
ECM New Series
A celebration of a fascinating figure for

his 80th birthday: composer, conductor and oboist Heinz Holliger. Works and performances of sometimes breathtaking immediacy and intimacy.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



JANÁČEK Piano Works

Jan Bartoš *pf*
Supraphon
Jan Bartoš draws you closely in to Janáček's compelling sound world, music both exposed and somehow personal, lines and details delivered from the very beginning with imagination and deep thought.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**



CROES La sonate égarée

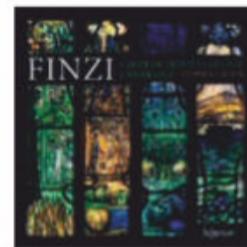
BarrocoTout

Linn

A debut disc – the result of success at the York Early Music

Competition – from a young Baroque ensemble possessed of all the flair, creative rapport and passion required to make the music of this era such a thrilling listen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



FINZI Choral Works

The Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge /
Stephen Layton
Hyperion

Uplifting, moving, poignant, triumphant – this gloriously, lovingly performed recital of Finzi's music fully reflects the breadth of the composer's masterly skill at writing for choir.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**

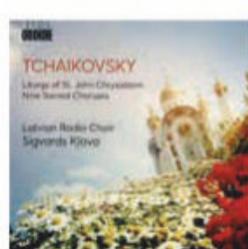


KAMINSKY As One

Sols; Fry Street Quartet /
Steven Osgood
Bright Shiny Things
A modern opera for minimal forces

(two singers, both playing the central transgender character, and string quartet – all bringing superb performances) from the American composer Laura Kaminsky.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 107**



TCHAIKOVSKY Liturgy of St John Chrysostom

Latvian Radio Choir /
Sigvards Kļava
Ondine
The atmosphere and context – music as extraordinary religious expression – is magisterially conveyed here by a choir on top form, with sound engineering that captures them perfectly.

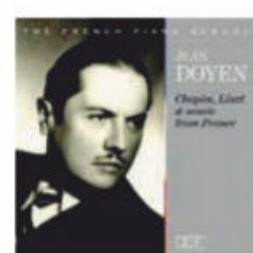
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 99**



'MESSES DE BARCELONE ET D'APT'

Ensemble Gilles Binchois /
Dominique Vellard
Evidence
The voices and players of Ensemble Gilles Binchois take us back to the 14th century with performances of engaging character, charm and conviction.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE

JEAN DOYEN

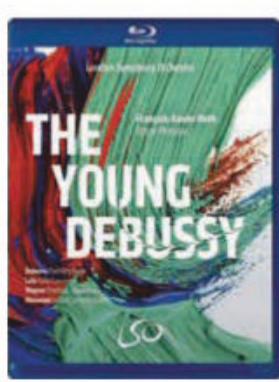
Recordings, 1930-43

Jean Doyen *pf*

APR

A portrait of the fastidious French pianist Jean Doyen in performances from 1930-43.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



DVD/BLU-RAY

'THE YOUNG DEBUSSY'
Edgar Moreau *vc* London Symphony Orchestra /
François-Xavier Roth
LSO Live
François-Xavier Roth's first concert as principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra captured for film.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 63**

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FOR THE RECORD

Edward Gardner is LPO's new Principal Conductor

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has announced that Edward Gardner will be its next Principal Conductor.

Gardner is the first British conductor to hold the post since Sir John Pritchard stepped down in 1966; he will take up the role at the start of the 2021-22 season, initially on a five-year contract. He will succeed Vladimir Jurowski, who has held the post since 2007, and who will become Conductor Emeritus.

No stranger to London audiences, Gardner led English National Opera from 2007 to 2015, whereupon he became Principal Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic. He'll be even less of a stranger to listeners to recordings: largely stemming from his relationship with the Chandos label, Gardner can be heard in many superb albums of repertoire including Walton, Grieg, Britten, Schoenberg and Szymanowski, while his recording of



Gardner is 'thrilled' to be taking over from Jurowski in 2021

Elgar's Symphony No 1 was named as the top modern choice in our Collection on the work last month.

The LPO, meanwhile, boasts its own successful label, its most recent release being a fascinating performance of Mahler's Symphony No 4 under Jurowski, named an Editor's Choice in this issue.

Gardner, who first conducted the LPO in 2003, described himself as 'thrilled' by the appointment. 'I worked with the orchestra early in my career and I was quite overwhelmed by the brilliance and virtuosity of the musicians. Returning to the orchestra recently, I've felt a sense of pleasure and privilege working with this inspiring group of musicians, and have

relished the passion and hunger the LPO brings to performance. I'm looking forward to our collaboration with huge anticipation and excitement.'

Warner Classics launches streaming website

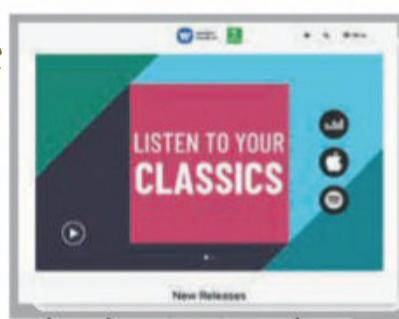
Warner Classics has launched a website to showcase its new releases and vast back catalogue.

Visitors to warnerclassics.com are offered 30-second excerpts of tracks; by then logging into their Apple, Spotify or Deezer accounts they can stream whole tracks from within the site, and there are 'buy' links to relevant digital retailers for CDs or downloads, generated by your geographical location. The music is accompanied by artists' biographies, playlists, articles and concert dates.

The search facility instantly gathers together an artist's entire catalogue on the label group, which, as well as new releases on Warner Classics and Erato, includes the many decades of legendary recordings on the one-time EMI label.

'We're entering a new era for Warner Classics as our repertoire really starts to reap the benefits of digital distribution,' said Markus Petersen, the group's SVP Global Operations and Business Development. 'One of our prime objectives is to provide ready and enjoyable access to new and recent releases of today's finest classical artists as well as to Warner Classics' magnificent catalogue.'

It's certainly an attractive and comprehensive attempt by a major company to address a challenge arguably presented by online music: that strong label identities – once key to how collectors thought about recordings – can perhaps feel less relevant, and certainly less obvious, when listening through a streaming service.



Cleobury receives choral music award

Sir Stephen Cleobury CBE has received the inaugural 'Lifetime Achievement in Choral Music' Award from the Worshipful Company of Musicians, the 500-year-old London-based organisation committed to preserving music excellence. The award was presented at a July ceremony in London in recognition of Cleobury's significant choral contribution, both in his 37 years as Organist and Director of Music at King's, and in his prior roles as Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral and sub-organist of Westminster Abbey.

Cleobury conducted his final concert at King's on June 28, and his last Evensong on July 7. You can listen to our interview with him, in which he discusses his new Howells recording, by visiting gramophone.co.uk/podcasts.



Medici's 'Gramophone selects'

Daniil Trifonov's 2019 Verbier Festival programme gives a totally different insight into this remarkable pianist's musical tastes. Starting with Berg and Prokofiev, he plays a fascinating 20th-century programme that extends to Corigliano and Adams by way of Cage and Stockhausen. Another Tchaikovsky Competition laureate, 2015's Gold Medallist Dmitry Masleev, plays sonatas by Medtner, Prokofiev and Miaskovsky. Opera-wise, catch Glyndebourne's new 'Masterchef-meets-Downton Abbey' *Magic Flute* and Salzburg's *Idomeneo* conducted by Teodor Currentzis. For our monthly choice, just go to medici.tv and search for 'Gramophone selects'.

Last call to vote for our Orchestra 2019!

Voting for *Gramophone's* 2019 Orchestra of the Year Award, presented with Apple Music, closes at midnight on September 7. To help you decide before you vote, visit gramophone.co.uk/applemusic and listen to the 10 playlists of our nominated ensembles – two from the USA (the Boston SO and San Francisco Symphony), two from the UK (the LSO and the RLPO), three from Continental Europe (the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Gothenburg SO and the Staatskapelle Berlin) and one from Asia (the Hong Kong Philharmonic), as well as two period-instrument ensembles (the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Les Siècles from France). There is also an 11th playlist featuring all the ensembles.



In addition, Rob Cowan and James Jolly present three podcasts focusing on the 10 competing ensembles. Sign up for a free three-month subscription to Apple Music, listen to the podcasts and playlists, and vote!

ONE TO WATCH

James Hall Countertenor

If you can judge a singer by the musical company he keeps, then young British countertenor James Hall should be held in very high esteem indeed. Among the leading ensembles and companies Hall has already worked with are the Academy of Ancient Music, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Il Pomo d'Oro, the Dunedin Consort, the Monteverdi Choir, La Nuova Musica, Classical Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Royal Opera House, and the Binchois Consort (including on their Editor's Choice-winning Hyperion album, 'Music for the 100 Years War').

Hall has even appeared on Broadway, as the singing voice in *Farinelli and the King*, a role also sung by British countertenor star Iestyn Davis (surely proof of further illustrious musical company!). That's where both Davis and the conductor Robert King became aware of Hall's talents, and it's on King's Vivat label, alongside Davis, that Hall is now about to make his first major solo studio appearance.



Handel, Britten and George Benjamin.

It's a span of repertoire that well reflects the diversity of Hall's upcoming projects: Goffredo in Handel's *Rinaldo* for Glyndebourne on Tour, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Benjamin's *Written on Skin* at the Venice Biennale. There's also solo Bach with violinist Viktoria Mullova and the AAM, Vivaldi's *Gloria* with the SCO and Maxim Emelyanychev, and further appearances with the King's Consort in Handel next season.

Very much a 'one to watch' then – and one with a whole host of opportunities, in a host of repertoire, with which to catch him.

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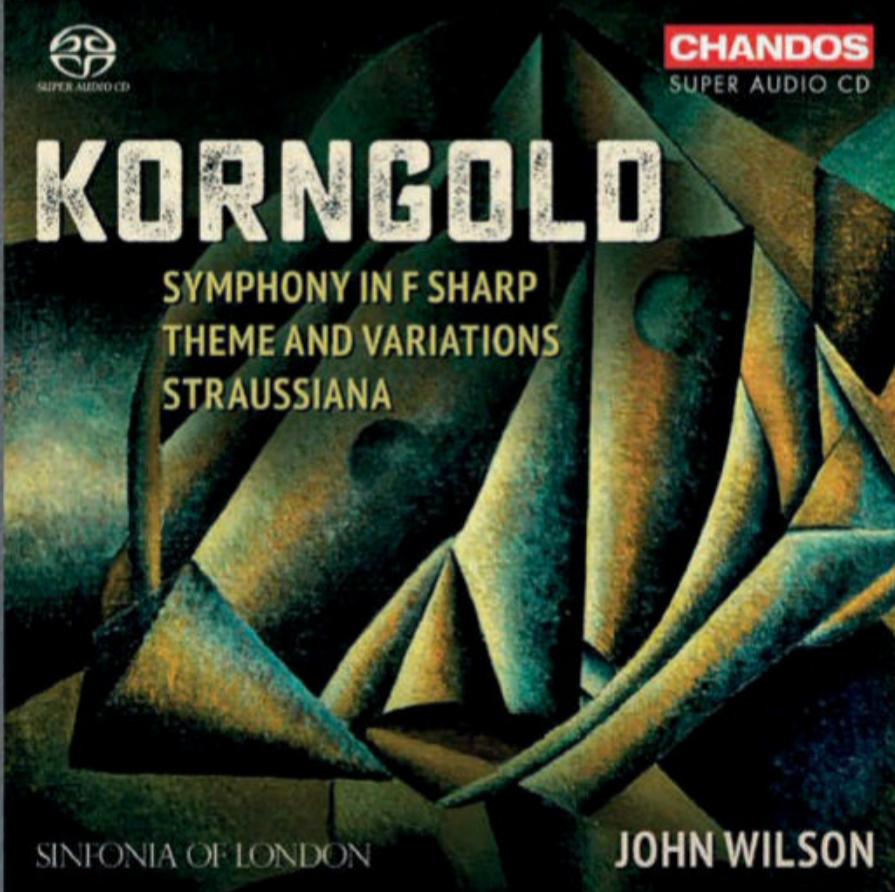
Visit the *Gramophone* website to read blogs by leading classical artists and composers. Recent posts include the violinist Harriet Mackenzie on her cross-genre recording project, and conductor Jessica Cottis on how the Royal Opera House is, through its pioneering, week-long 'Women Conductors Course', nurturing the early careers of female conductors in opera.

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VOLUME 2**
BBC Philharmonic | Rumon Gamba
The eagerly anticipated second volume of Rumon Gamba's fascinating survey of lesser-known British musical gems. Includes two world premiere recordings.

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**Lisa Friend | Craig Ogden
Aquarelle Guitar Quartet**
Lisa Friend leads this collection of original works and transcriptions for flute and guitars, joined by Craig Ogden and the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet. The wide-ranging programme includes Fauré's Pavane and Rachmaninoff's Vocalise.

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

SYMPHONY IN F SHARP · THEME AND VARIATIONS · STRAUSSIANA

Sinfonia of London | John Wilson

John Wilson and his Sinfonia of London shine in an all-Korngold programme full of wit, romanticism, sensitivity, and virtuosity – an orchestral *tour de force!*

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PIANO PIECES

Imogen Cooper

Imogen Cooper explores the links between French and Spanish styles in a programme ranging from Albéniz to Mompou via Debussy, Ravel, and Falla.



BÉLA BARTÓK
BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE
**Michelle DeYoung | John Relyea
Pál Mácsai | Bergen Philharmonic
Orchestra | Edward Gardner**

Following acclaimed performances around the globe, John Relyea's interpretation of Duke Bluebeard now appears on record, with Michelle DeYoung as Judit and Edward Gardner leading his Bergen forces with aplomb.

ARTISTS & their INSTRUMENTS

Nicholas Daniel on the 1911 'Goossens' Lorée oboe on loan to him

“It all started when I received a call from my friend Paul McCreesh. He said, 'I have this crazy idea to recreate the British coronations of the 20th century,' and I said that I might be able to persuade Jennie Goossens to let me borrow her father Léon's 1911 Lorée oboe for it. It's the instrument he played for his whole career – including all but one of the 20th-century coronations. So I ended up playing it on the Gabrielis' 'An English Coronation' CD, and I've played it for some other projects, too, including a Sibelius Second with the OAE.

Léon received the oboe as a gift from his father when he was nine years old. He premiered hundreds of works on it, including the concertos by Vaughan Williams, Strauss and his brother Eugene Goossens, and works by Britten, Howells, Finzi, Elgar, Bliss and Bax. When Sibelius heard him play in a performance of his Second Symphony conducted by Thomas Beecham, he called the conductor and said, 'Who was the oboist? Tell him he plays too beautifully!'

Once, Léon was on the way back from the south coast to London when he stopped to get some fuel for his car. He left the oboe case on the back seat and when he got back, it was gone.

It turned up, empty, on the beach in Brighton and he assumed the oboe was at the bottom of the ocean. Two years later, he received an anonymous phone call: 'Mr Goossens, your oboe is in a shop in south London, and it's been labelled as a clarinet.'

I was first introduced to Léon at Jennie's house in West London, ahead of his 90th birthday concert at Wigmore Hall. He'd broken his



thumb and said, 'Could you give my oboe a little blow?' I was like, 'Oh my god!', but I stuck a reed in it and played it.

It was the strangest feeling. After many decades of being played by him in that beautiful, refined way, the oboe didn't sound like me at all. I realised that I'd been going down a path towards a plummy, rich, dark sound, and this little oboe of Léon's made me reassess that. It's like fake tan – you don't need mahogany, just a bit of a glow. So I went to Lorée and they told me about their 'Etoile' – I tried it and had to have it.

My Etoile's made of wood that's up to 10 years old, but back in the day, the wood would have been kept for up to 30 years before being used. Some of the keys on the Goossens are hollow so you're touching wood that's more than 100 years old – it's a gorgeous feeling. The high C is the most beautiful note I've played on any oboe, and the bottom notes are so easy to produce – you think it, and it speaks. To play high E on a modern oboe, all the fingers have go down, but on Leon's it's just one finger and a thumb – it's like sliding down a ski slope, the sound just pours out. There are many things it doesn't have, of course: there's no third octave key, the

long C sharp is awkward ... But that's why it's so fascinating!

I've found that the sound carries over gut strings particularly well. I'd love to play the Vaughan Williams Oboe Concerto on it with period instruments. Can you imagine how great that would sound? **”**

For information on his upcoming recordings and concerts and ongoing charity work, visit nicholasdaniel.co.uk

Sound artist Bill Fontana makes Beethoven 250 tribute for Bonn



American sound artist Bill Fontana has created an installation for the Beethoven-Haus Bonn, as part of the composer's birthplace's celebrations of his 250th anniversary.

Called *Harmonic Time Travel*, what Fontana describes as a 'hovering sound cloud possessing the quality of a sonic spirit' can be heard in front of, and within, the museum.

To capture the sounds, the pianist Dmitri Gladkov played Beethoven's music on a grand piano from the composer's era. Fontana then placed accelerometers (vibration sensors) on the strings of a nearby grand piano once played by Beethoven himself, which allowed Fontana to extract sound material from the harmonics prompted by Gladkov's playing. These were then combined with soundscapes captured from the city of Bonn. The installation opened in June and runs until December 12.

McGregor's music commissions for dance will form new album

Horeographer Wayne McGregor has curated an album featuring music he has commissioned for his dance productions across the past quarter of a century. Called 'Wayne McGregor: Collaboration', it will be released on the Mercury KX label – an imprint of Universal Music Group/Decca Records – on September 6.

One of today's leading figures in contemporary dance, McGregor has collaborated with composers including Kaija Saariaho, Max Richter, Nico Muhly, and Sir John Tavener, whose music for the ballet *Amu* receives its world-premiere recording on this release. Several of the pieces have been re-recorded and rearranged, in collaboration with McGregor and the original composer.

'Working in collaborative dialogue with other artists has always fuelled my creative process,' said McGregor. 'I feel privileged to have shared these endeavours with such a range of talented and inquisitive people.'





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GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ... *Scherzo*

Lindsay Kemp surveys the evolution of a form defined chiefly by its character

It means ‘joke’ of course, and for nearly two centuries that was about as precise as it got as a term for a piece of music. To the composers of the early Baroque it was a word to use for light-hearted vocal pieces with a dance rhythm, as in Monteverdi’s *Scherzi musicali* madrigals of 1632. Throughout the 17th century and well into the 18th, it might crop up as the title of an instrumental piece. Walther, Schenk and Bonporti all produced sets of ‘scherzi’ at one time or another, without suggesting that the word indicated a form rather than a feeling; Schenk’s, for instance, were suites.

It was in the Classical period that the scherzo was found in its now accepted position in the multi-movement framework that served for symphonies and quartets alike. In his Op 33 string quartets of 1781, Haydn used the term for the triple-time movement previously known as a ‘minuet and trio’, though keeping the same arrangement of two binary-form sections, the first reprised after the second (‘the trio’) to give the overall shape A-B-A.

In fact Haydn’s scherzos were not greatly different in character from his previous minuets, and he didn’t use the term again (his music is not short of jokes elsewhere), but something must have made an impression, because right from the beginning of his composing career Beethoven was including scherzos in his piano sonatas, symphonies and chamber works. And for him they were intended to be jokey: quicker than minuets, they often mercilessly teased the listener (and perhaps players too) with deceptive cross-



Berlioz's 'Queen Mab' Scherzo (*Roméo et Juliette*) has a Mendelssohnian lightness

accents, stop-starts and other surprises, as for instance in the *Spring Violin Sonata*, Op 24, and the *String Quartet* Op 135.

After Beethoven, the scherzo was a fixture, occurring in sonatas and chamber music by Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn, who in his Octet and several other works introduced a new element of wispy feather-lightness (imitated by Berlioz in the ‘Queen Mab’ Scherzo of *Roméo et Juliette*). With later Romantics the symphonic/sonata scherzo lived on in spirit and/or function right through to the 20th century, even when losing its name or changing slightly in character (Tchaikovsky referencing the waltz, for instance). Mahler’s Ländler-infused scherzos often added a touch of the grotesque (for example in the Sixth Symphony), subsequently taken up with relish by Shostakovich and Prokofiev. In the meantime a trend for free-standing scherzos had begun, initiated perhaps by Chopin’s four dazzlers for solo piano, and followed by such diverse orchestral examples as Dvořák’s *Scherzo capriccioso*, the *Scherzo fantastiques* of Suk and Stravinsky, and even (as the subtitle tells us) Dukas’s *L'apprenti sorcier*. Throughout all its formal changes, then, it seems we’ve somehow always known what a scherzo is really. **G**

► Listen to our Scherzo playlist on Qobuz

IN THE STUDIO

● Following performances of the Chopin piano concertos last November, **Benjamin Grosvenor** has been reunited with the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** under Elim Chan to record the same works for Decca. The early-August sessions took place at the RSNO Centre in Glasgow and the results will be released in the spring of next year.

● **Francesca Dego** is collaborating with Sir Roger Norrington and the **RSNO** on a Mozart violin concertos project for DG. Due to be released across two volumes, the first has just been recorded – again at Glasgow’s RSNO Centre.

● The French pianist **Elizabeth Sombart** has just recorded the Beethoven piano concertos with the **RPO** across eight days at Cadogan Hall. The discs will be released by Signum on three separate volumes next year, in March, June and October.

● Brass septet **Septura** have completed a recording of *The Nutcracker* for Naxos at St Jude’s Church in Hampstead. Between May 31 and June 2, the septet were joined by the actor and director **Derek Jacobi** as the narrator for the project, due for release in November.

● **Beatrice Rana** is about to finish her new recording for Warner Classics. Early next month, the pianist heads to Berlin to record Stravinsky’s *Three Movements from Petrushka*, the culmination of a Stravinsky/Ravel programme that she began recording in June. The album is due to be released on October 25.

● For the first time since the Beecham recording exactly 60 years ago, Sir Eugene Goossen’s edition of Handel’s *Messiah* returns to the studio, with the same orchestra. With conductor Jonathan Griffith at the helm, the **RPO** and a 120-strong chorus combining members of the **National Youth Choir of Great Britain** and the **Jonathan Griffith Singers** will gather at Abbey Road this summer. The recording, on the RPO’s own label, is scheduled for release in March or April next year.

● It’s been a busy time for Chandos: **London Brass** were at Henry Wood Hall in June to record music by Edward Gregson, and **Edward Gardner** was at City Hall, Birmingham, to continue his CBSO Schubert symphony cycle; both will be released in the spring of 2020. Meanwhile, **Sir Andrew Davis** was, in July, recording Sir Eugene Goossens’s Symphony No 2 with the Melbourne SO, due for release in early 2020.

ORCHESTRA *Insight ...*

Russian National Orchestra

Our monthly series telling the story behind an orchestra

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Artistic Director Mikhail Pletnev

Once upon a time, you knew when you were hearing a Russian orchestra. These days, you can't be so sure. That might be a result of increasing orchestral globalisation but it's also connected to a relatively new orchestra that has become one of the country's biggest musical exports.

The Russian National Orchestra was founded by the pianist and conductor Mikhail Pletnev in 1990 – the first symphony orchestra in Russia to exist outside government control. It wasn't just the constitution that was new. Pletnev wanted a new kind of 'Russian' sound, something removed from the shrieking colours and relentless heft associated with the stereotypical Russian orchestra of the time. Pletnev would fashion his new orchestra in his own image: with the composure and clarity for which he was known as a pianist.

The success of Pletnev's experiment must be judged on audition, but there's no doubting the distinctiveness of the playing he engendered. It retained a certain boldness, but with better blending woodwinds, and strings that sounded more velvety than earthy. Critics soon noticed that the RNO was shunning traditional Russian sentimentalism in favour of something more multifaceted and colourful.

The RNO became the first Russian orchestra to perform in Israel and at the Vatican, and attracted major sponsorship from international banks and diplomatic figures. But its profile would cause problems. When Pletnev stepped back in 1999 to become Conductor Laureate, the RNO was undermined by the Russian government's founding of a state-sponsored rival (the National Philharmonic Orchestra) comprising many of the same musicians. Pletnev returned with steely resolve and a key innovation:



a 'collegium' of chief conductors, including Vladimir Jurowski and Kent Nagano, to further bolster his ensemble's international presence. He reunited the orchestra with DG's mics, providing numerous documents of that very particular sound including discussion-worthy Beethoven symphony and concerto cycles.

The RNO's discography stretches to over 80 titles, with its Virgin Classics recording of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, *Pathétique*, being named by *Gramophone* as one of 'The 100 Greatest Recordings'. Many of the recordings make a statement: *Peter and the Wolf*, narrated by Sophia Loren, Bill Clinton and Mikhail Gorbachev, is a clear indication of Pletnev's desire for the RNO to be seen as an ambassador for an outward-looking Russia. It remains as such today, visiting festivals from Latvia to California, stopping by at the BBC Proms, and presenting its own series in Moscow and many far-flung corners of Russia too.

Andrew Mellor

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Celebrating the album

The second edition of National Album Day has been announced, again to celebrate the format's relevance and legacy across musical genres. Taking place in the UK on October 12, and jointly organised by the BPI (the UK's record industry body) and the music retailers association ERA, the year's main theme – called 'Don't Skip' – will encourage people to listen to an album from beginning to end, and promote the idea that listening to an album in its entirety can have positive well-being and mental health benefits.

Dame Sarah Connolly

Dame Sarah has announced her withdrawal from performances at ENO and the Proms to undergo surgery for breast cancer. 'Like so many women afflicted with this disease, I will

face whatever is coming as best I can,' the mezzo said, adding that she hopes 'to fulfil all other concert and recording commitments over the coming months'. All at *Gramophone* wish her well in the months ahead.

Norma Fisher, Vol 2

Last year saw the release by Sonetto Classics of recordings made in the 1970s by Norma Fisher, an acclaimed pianist who was sadly forced to stop performing after developing focal dystonia, but who went on to become one of today's most sought-after piano teachers. Incredibly well received – Michelle Assay named it her Critics' Choice of 2018 – that first album of Brahms and Scriabin (7/18) is now being followed in September by a recording of music by Liszt, Schumann, Debussy and Tchaikovsky.



Norma Fisher: her 1970s recordings are a revelation

FROM WHERE I SIT

Soundtracks presented me with a way into the rarefied world of classical music Edward Seckerson



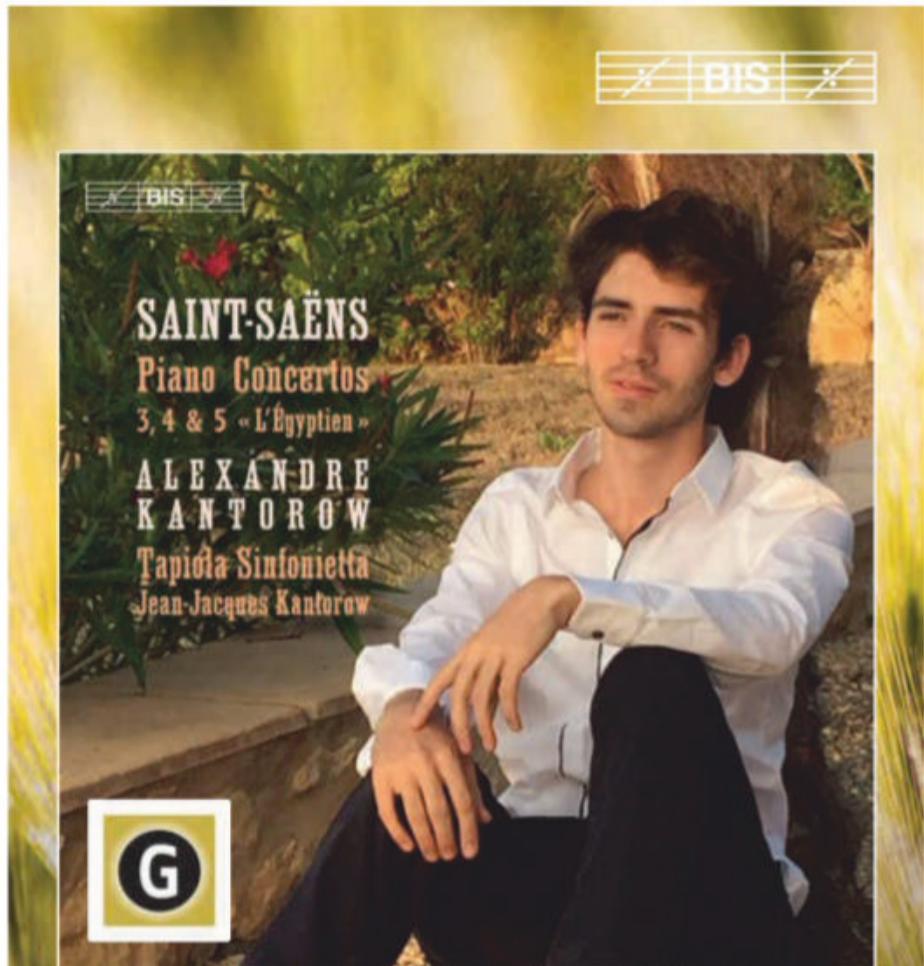
Movie music aficionados are a very particular breed – serious, knowledgeable, fanatical. Even the soft-core variety – as I once was – are fiercely defensive of their favourite practitioners. The music and the indelible images they amplify are forever stored in their imagination. For me as a teenage boy, movie soundtracks were both a parallel path and a way into the rarefied world of classical music. At one time I embraced both equally. And I distinctly remember my parents' disappointment that I would split my hard-earned spending money equally between acquiring the latest Dimitri Tiomkin or Bronisław Kaper score (namely *55 Days at Peking* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*) and my first recording of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* (Ferenc Fricsay and the Berlin Philharmonic). In my parents' eyes the money spent on these often short-measure soundtracks was better spent on 'proper music'. My protests went unheeded.

I acquired some treasures on the movie front: a rare LP pressing of Alfred Newman's highly intense score for *The Diary of Anne Frank* and the lavish fold-out booklet edition of Alex North's sensational score for Kubrick's *Spartacus*. The Main Title of that score was especially striking for its brassy dissonance and there were parallels to be drawn with André Previn's equally uncompromising strings and brass treatment (referencing Hindemith's *Music for Strings and Brass*) for *Elmer Gantry* released in the same year, 1960.

But this was also the era of Miklós Rózsa whose Oscar-winning *Ben-Hur* score took epic orchestral scoring and fabulous Hebraic themes to another level. I distinctly remember the in-built Overture for its first run at the Empire Leicester Square, the gold curtains magically parting to a soft incantation of the unmistakable chords of its thunderous main theme. More than any other movie music I grew up with this score exemplified the interplay and transformation of key motifs. It was the most composerly and 'symphonic' of scores.

As my musicality developed and my musical interests broadened I could be more objective about the role of music in the cinema and I became less of a 'collector' and more of an 'observer'. I could take a step backwards and appreciate the immeasurable contribution of Bernard Herrmann's music for Hitchcock or Nino Rota's for Fellini; I could thrill to Maurice Jarre's amazing work with synthesised keyboards for the 'raising of the barn' sequence in Peter Weir's masterful *Witness* and more recently wonder at Hans Zimmer's work on *Gladiator*, *Interstellar* and *Dunkirk*.

But as I write I am reminded of a memorable encounter with the godfather of this genre – the most prolific of them all, John Williams – who, when I met him for a major feature in *The Independent*, so modestly paid tribute to all the classical composers who had inspired him to boldly go where few had been before. But Williams made me chuckle when he recalled working with Hitchcock on his last film *Family Plot*. Hitchcock thought the first draft of the score too lugubrious. 'But it's a film about murder', said Williams. 'Ah, but murder can be fun', retorted Hitchcock. **G**



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MUTTER'S *movie magic*

Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter has been working on an unexpected project with John Williams, for which the film composer has adapted excerpts from some of his most famous soundtracks, reports Neil Fisher

Anne-Sophie Mutter is a violinist of broad horizons. She will talk about the 20th-century painters who've influenced her, the unusual pedagogues, the intellectual debates over composers. Just for a moment, however, she wants to talk about a book that was important to her when she was growing up in the Black Forest. It's a simple fairy tale, but the Black Forest is a fairy-tale sort of place, particularly where Mutter lived, right in the crook of south-west Germany, close to the French and Swiss borders.

This book was about a small boy, so small that his father was rather disappointed in him. But he had a talent for the fiddle.

'When he played backwards,' Mutter remembers, 'things would become small, and when he played forwards, things would grow.'

The story continues. A greedy king sees how he can take advantage of the boy with the enchanted violin. 'He takes the boy and tells him to play for his army, which will then be bigger than anybody else's – and he'll win the war. But the boy plays backwards. The bad king

That was John's decision. Also *Jaws!*' The last seems like a bizarre proposition. And in the end it was. 'The violin is too high in the register. There is a limit.'

Mutter had worked with Williams before, on the 2017 piece *Markings* for violin, harp and strings. She wanted to coax him into writing a full-blown concerto, but the latest collaboration instead turned into this film music project. Williams is 87 years old, but Mutter, 56, still lives in hope. 'I think, without saying too much, that he is not yet finished with the idea of writing a concerto for me.'

Yet she does not believe that 'Across the Stars' represents a compromise or 'second best'. Speaking in the green room of the Bayerischer Rundfunk television and radio studios in her home city of Munich (she has just done a live interview on regional TV), she says that the project that emerged had been 'maybe more out of reach' than the concerto idea, 'because John definitely didn't expect me to be interested in playing some of his most iconic film themes, and I didn't dare to ask. But then there's André – or then there *was* André ...'

She refers, of course, to André Previn, who died in February this year. Mutter and Previn

'As a child, I was fascinated by the possibilities of the violin. That it could be magical. And it is'

shrinks to the size of a grain of rice and disappears somewhere into the floor. And that was the end of the story.' Mutter says that as a little girl she would read the story over and over again. 'I was fascinated by the possibilities. That a violin could be magical. And it is.'

It is one clue behind Mutter's unexpected new project, 'Across the Stars', a collaboration with the king of film music John Williams (Oscars: five; Grammys: 24; tear-jerking interludes: too many to count).

In this space- and time-traversing album, the Mutter Strad casts Hogwarts-branded spells ('Hedwig's Theme' from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*), chases Yoda and the Skywalker siblings across a galaxy far, far away (*Star Wars* and sequels), depicts the eponymous, blood-sucking patrician in John Badham's 1979 *Dracula* ('Night Journeys'), and rattles along after Tintin and his dastardly adversaries ('The Duel' from *The Adventures of Tintin*, 2011).

It's only a shame, says Mutter, that some of Williams's absolute belters didn't make the list. So does she believe a violin can fly? 'Yes, I would have loved to play the theme from *Superman!* And *Indiana Jones* – are you kidding? *War Horse*, too – horrible title for a film, wonderful music. But that is not for the violin.'

were married from 2002 to 2006, and remained close friends and colleagues after their divorce. And Previn and Williams's relationship went back decades. 'They were best pals from when they met at the age of around 18 or 19 and started out in Hollywood,' Mutter explains. 'Movingly enough, the studio in which we recorded this new album was where André's career in film also started, some 60 years ago, and so in a way it all came to a close. For those five days in which we were recording in Los Angeles, André's spirit was definitely in the air.' She is talking about what is now the Sony studio lot in Culver City, the same room where the music for *The Wizard of Oz* and *Singin' in the Rain* was recorded. Those films were produced by MGM, where Previn worked for 16 years – his first job out of high school.

Previn was much more than just a guiding light for Mutter and Williams. He brought them together and pointed the composer towards some of the less iconic film scores that he thought could work well in violin-led arrangements, among them the *Dracula* piece and 'Nice To Be Around' from the '70s romantic drama *Cinderella Liberty*, a theme originally played by the virtuoso harmonica player Toots Thielemans. Previn insisted Williams adapt it. And he told Williams



'He really knows how to orchestrate': Mutter is in awe of Williams the composer

to stretch Mutter as much as he could, resulting in a suitably fiendish expansion of 'Hedwig's Theme' from *Harry Potter*, a six-minute workout which Mutter compares to Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy*. 'Apparently he called John up and said, "It has to be more virtuosic!" So John piled up more difficulties, more double-stops. It was like a joint venture between two composers, and then there was me, getting the scores and sweating.'

Does Mutter think that Previn suffered in some quarters – especially the rarefied symphonic world – for working across

film, jazz and classical music, and treating all three with equal importance? 'I think that, musically speaking, he did what he felt he needed to do. He was a complete musician, and that is what I want to be too. I don't see any division between a greatly crafted score for a film, which can stand perfectly fine by itself without the pictures or storyline, or another piece of music which has no programme. Strauss's *Don Quixote* is music that might have a storyline, but even if you don't know the story, and the two main characters of the viola and cello, it's great music and you can enjoy it for what it is.' It was Previn, she asserts, who taught her which side she wanted to be on when it came to this question: 'Are you a specialist and soloist purely, or are you instead a musician who wants to see the entire cosmos rather than just a small bit of it?'

'What John knows about music – violin playing, bowings, phrasing ... I don't know any non-violinist who is that insightful'

Working directly with Williams has been an eye-opener for Mutter. Owing to an unexpected pause on shooting the latest *Star Wars* film, the composer 'properly' rewrote all the themes recorded on the album. The two worked in the studio to go over the fresh arrangements and orchestration. 'And what he knows about music, about violin playing, about bowings, phrasing ... I was really taken aback. Because I don't know any non-violinist who is that insightful.' She chalks this up to



Williams conducts Mutter and the Los Angeles Recording Arts Orchestra during sessions in a Culver City studio where the late André Previn's 'spirit was definitely in the air'



Previn, here with Mutter in 2005, did much to bring the film music project together

Williams's on-the-job training as a composer, which began by writing music for television shows more or less on demand, in a variety of different styles. 'He's one of the last film composers – if not *the* last – who uses a huge orchestra and really knows how to orchestrate, and is properly doing that himself, and not through a computer or other people; unlike others who apparently play a tune on the piano with one finger and then get the credit.'

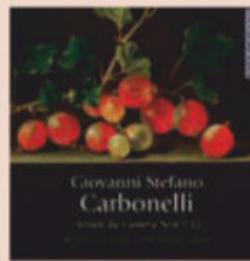
Mutter appreciates craft. To prepare for 'Across the Stars' she did not spend days on end binge-watching the films from which these themes originate – tempting as it surely might have been to spend days on the sofa and call it homework; instead, she enjoyed the act of 'dressing up', of making her violin 'act' like the instruments originally spotlit by Williams. In *Star Wars*, for example, playing the classic 'Princess Leia's Theme' meant 'finding the right horn-like timbre, as if suspended in the air – finding that timeless heroic scope that the horn just has. It's nothing to do with playing loudly, just finding a timbre that the violin doesn't normally have.'

In classical music things need to evolve slowly ... musicians need the chance to grow. None of us became who we are overnight'

So much about Mutter's career appears to be constant that it can sometimes be mistaken for routine, albeit routine at the highest possible level. She is in her fifth decade of recording for DG (she started in 1978, at the age of 14, with Herbert von Karajan, the Berlin Philharmonic and Mozart's Third and Fifth Violin Concertos). This master technician's calling card is a big, vibrant sound – well, that and, in live performances, her trademark strapless dresses in block colour (they are all designed by British couturier Nicholas Oakwell, since you ask).

Perhaps there is something timeless about the sum effect, but she is not standing still. This new album is surely proof of that. So, too, is the roster of composers she's just been working with. 'So there was Penderecki's big 85th birthday, and a big celebration for him, the great composer in my life, who's given me four amazing pieces,' she says, quietly triumphant. 'And at the same time there was John, who I was working with on this, totally different, project, and at the same time Jörg Widmann

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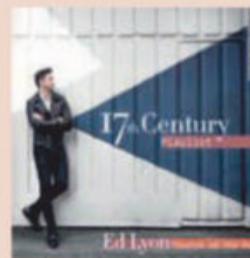
CD D34214

Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli:
Sonate da Camera, Vol 2
Bojan Čičić violin, The Illyria Consort

With their debut recording on Delphian, Bojan Čičić and his Illyria Consort propelled the name of Carbonelli from obscurity into the classical charts, recapturing the excitement which the violinist-composer stirred up in eighteenth-century London. Now they bring to Carbonelli's other six surviving sonatas the same intelligence, sensitivity and sheer, exhilarating virtuosic brilliance with which they proved him to be so much more than just a 'follower of Corelli' or 'contemporary of Vivaldi'. For good measure they add in a fine concerto by the latter that bears Carbonelli's name, demonstrating the respect in which he was held in his native Italy before setting off to find his fame and fortune in England.

'superb and passionate ...'

The future of the Illyria Consort is bright'
— BBC Music Magazine, September 2017 [on Vol 1]



CD D34220

17th-Century Playlist
Ed Lyon, Theatre of the Ayre

Tenor Ed Lyon has been one of the UK's most versatile and sought-after soloists for over a decade. Now, for Delphian, comes his first solo recording project, inspired by the immediacy, joy and freedom found in seventeenth-century music. Joined by Theatre of the Ayre – a flexible and innovative ensemble led by the lutenist Elizabeth Kenny – he has conceived his very own 'playlist': a live mixtape of the songs, simultaneously catchy and sophisticated, which became the earworms of their day.

'Ed Lyon reaffirms his claim to be one of the pre-eminent Baroque tenors of our time'
— The Independent, March 2011

[on Handel: *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, DCD34094]



CD D34229

I and Silence: Women's Voices in American Song
Lieberson - Argento - Barber - Copland - Crumb
Marta Fontanals-Simmons mezzo-soprano,
Lana Bode piano

'Did I sing too loud?' asked Emily Dickinson in 1861, in a poem set a century later by Aaron Copland. The expectations of silence often placed on women, historically and politically, and music's power to break through them, are the themes of this deeply personal recital by mezzo-soprano Marta Fontanals-Simmons and pianist Lana Bode. Their programme reflects and channels the voices of female writers and musicians: Dickinson herself, Sara Teasdale and Virginia Woolf are among those whose words are set in the works brought together here, two of which – Dominick Argento's *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* and Peter Lieberson's *Rilke Songs* – were written for great mezzo-sopranos of the recent past, Dame Janet Baker and Lorraine Hunt Lieberson. They stand here as powerful meditations on loss, vulnerability, tenacity and mindfulness.

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Mutter is drawn to composers who understand how the timbres of instruments can provide a narrative or contribute a musical gesture – ‘I need to find emotion there’

had finished a string quartet, and Unsuk Chin had finished a piece for two solo fiddles, and I played the world premiere of Sebastian Currier’s fabulous *Ghost Trio* for piano trio.’

Can she put her finger on what those composers might have common? She can try. ‘A certain sense of architecture and ... I don’t know if sensuality is the right word. Beauty is also not the right word ... Some understanding that music needs to have a narrative. Understanding what timbres certain instruments can provide for a musical gesture.’ We circle back to the beauty/sensuality problem. ‘Some kind of emotion, whatever you want to call it – I need to find it there. But that’s very subjective, obviously. I’m a great Thomas Adès fan, and I’m really jealous about his first violin concerto. I don’t know why it wasn’t written for me [it was composed for British violinist Anthony Marwood] – it would have been perfect for me!’ She could still play it, surely? ‘No, I want my own.’ Is that forthcoming? It sounds like it will eventually happen, whether Adès wants it to or not. ‘He has to work at it, but we have discussed it, and it looks promising.’

One can understand what Mutter would see in the ferociously detailed, technically exhausting but also romantically driven music of Adès. Less so with Boulez, whom she pursued for a concerto for many years, in the end unsuccessfully. Being conducted by him drove her admiration, she says. ‘It was so fascinating to work with him in rehearsals, which was why I wanted the challenge. I knew I would have probably needed 20 years to study it, but I was willing to do it – if I’d have been able to do it. I don’t know – maybe it’s better I never found out.’

Mutter’s appetite for new music is tempered by regret for newer listening habits. Streaming or downloading music without copyright approval is one bugbear. ‘I grew up very

aware with my composer friends of what it means to create something, and to have that protected. So I’m a little nervous about the fact that, in huge parts of the world, respect for that doesn’t exist anymore. It’s the downside of streaming things from YouTube and other channels which aren’t supposed to be free.’

More broadly, Mutter is concerned about the implications of an ‘on-demand’ culture of listening, of people dipping into music that isn’t fairly representing the efforts of the players, particularly if they’re listening to highly compressed sound files while on the go. ‘We are losing the ability of very precise and careful listening,’ she says. ‘It’s not good for music. I’m really concerned about the fact that so much subtlety of the moment, of the musical gesture, of the emotion and greatness of a composition, is just bypassing us because we don’t have the time to be here. It’s why I still love the LP. You sit, you celebrate it, you take the time, and, as much as the CD is great and streaming is fabulous, whether it’s on your phone, in your car or in the bathroom, it’s always in the second row of your attention. You consume it while you do something else.’

What would her sometime mentor Karajan have thought of a world where his minutely calibrated recordings could be disseminated so casually? ‘Well, he would also have loved the fact that music could be available anytime, anywhere. But it’s like Goethe’s *Der Zauberlehrling* [*The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*] – you ask for the ghosts and then they take over. We asked the ghosts to have music anywhere under any circumstances, and now we have the copyright problem. And we have the problem of a record industry that is firing up one musician after the other, one product after another, because the market wants new faces, but in classical music things need to evolve slowly, and they need to evolve over a longer period.

A musician needs the chance to grow – none of us became who we are overnight.'

This might sound curmudgeonly, were it not for the fact that through her own foundation, set up 21 years ago, Mutter invests time and, sometimes, money in mentoring younger artists, to try to develop their talents in the right direction. One example is the Slovak double bass player Roman Patkaló. 'What could I do with him? I asked a lot of composers to write for him, because it was clear he was an amazing soloist. Penderecki wrote for him, Wolfgang Rihm wrote for him. My foundation paid for that, because he needed repertoire so that he could shine.'

Against that success story, however, she admits that the organisation 'survives or falls with the young musicians I find. You can give all the help you want, but at the end of the day, people's lives are unpredictable, and sometimes I just don't understand how some musicians have careers and others, who I find superior or more interesting, go nowhere.' When I ask who in the younger generations she is currently inspired by, she mentions the 14-year-old British prodigy Alma Deutscher, a violinist and composer who's had the misfortune to be christened 'Little Miss Mozart' by some in the media. 'I have brought together her and Jörg Widmann,' Mutter says. 'She's not officially my scholar, but I like to keep track of what she's doing. She is gifted and intelligent enough to grow up into someone who genuinely has her own musical voice. She is a huge talent, and so there are a few of us musicians hovering over her and hoping that everything goes well for her.'

I'll be sharing music with film fans and showing them how fascinating the violin is, not persuading them to listen to Bach'

What else has Mutter got on her plate? Performing extracts from 'Across the Stars' will be another new experience, because she'll take them to big open-air venues unfamiliar to her. 'I'll be sharing music with film fans, and, you know, also showing them how utterly fascinating the violin is. But I'm not intending to persuade anyone to come and listen to Bach solos.' At the other extreme of live performance, she has loved giving recitals in music clubs (her Yellow Lounge album is a record of this). 'It's a small room where the audience is close to you. They can see you sweat and see what hard work it is to perform. It's where you can talk to the audience, where it's OK to have fun. It's kind of, "Wow!"'

In 2020 there will be Beethoven, naturally, for it's an anniversary year. In 1998, Mutter undertook a daunting tour of the entire Beethoven sonata cycle, and recorded it live. 'But next year will be tremendous because I finally have the chance to get close to late Beethoven. It's a new journey, and it's a good moment in my life to do that – because in 2021 I will take a year off and totally restructure my life.'

Mutter has sprung a cliffhanger answer on me and I'm not entirely sure even she knows what she means by it. After this gap year, what will characterise the rebooted Mutter? 'Performing less. Having more study time. I need to refocus – on how I can be a more useful member of human society.' Perhaps she is thinking back to that boy's magic violin, and what good things she can make bigger if she just plays it in the right direction. **G**

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STAR WARS



John Williams, with director George Lucas (by podium), records the sixth Star Wars instalment, *Revenge of the Sith*, with the LSO at Abbey Road in 2005

The art of FILM MUSIC

Advances in technology and an increasing openness to new ideas has radically changed the craft of composing film scores, finds James McCarthy

John Williams's craft, his technical approach to film scoring, is one shared by almost all film composers from the dawn of cinema to at least the 1980s. Director Steven Spielberg summarised it neatly in 2016: 'Everybody, except John, makes the movie. Thousands of people from all over the world working together for months, sometimes for years, and then finally we show our work to him ... John watches the movie and he goes back to his house and he sits alone with a yellow pad and a pencil at his 100-year-old Steinway piano and he begins to write ...'

FROM PENCIL AND PAPER TO COMPUTERS

In the 40-odd years since Williams scored the likes of *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (from 1977) and *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), technological developments have revolutionised the way that films are produced – including how the music is composed. British composer Benjamin Wallfisch – whose career has taken him from writing classical concert music, to assisting and co-writing soundtracks with Hans Zimmer (*Hidden Figures*, 2016; *Blade Runner 2049*, 2017), to being the lead composer on major Hollywood scores for films such as *It* (2017) and *Shazam!* (2019) – has a deep understanding of both Williams's traditional

techniques and how film music is written today. 'About 12 years ago I was invited to spend an afternoon looking through Williams's original pencil sketches, and ever since then I've tried to be a student of his process, even though I write everything on a computer-based system,' he says. 'Seeing cues like "Adventures on Earth" or the "Imperial March" in short score gives a fascinating insight into his process, where there is such incredible fluency and momentum to the writing but with absolutely no compromise when it comes to every single detail of orchestration and colour being clearly notated. There's certainly a lot to be learnt from studying those sketches, the biggest takeaway perhaps being how quickly the ideas can flow when all you have is pencil and manuscript paper.'

Flow. That's the key facet of the film composer's craft. Because film composers have to work so fast, they must be masters of the tools they have to hand, whether that tool is a grand piano or a computer. Williams was classically trained

and has always written his music on manuscript paper, so for him that was the most natural, most fluent way of composing. But a film composer's job today is very different.

One practice that film composers have had to adopt is that of producing 'mock-ups' of their cues so that directors and producers can approve the music before the time comes to record it with real musicians. Wallfisch explains: 'Computer-based sequencers give us the opportunity to present our music to our film-makers in a really detailed and accurate way. It has become the exception to write using pencil and paper, and this I think is also in part owing to the bigger picture of how film-making techniques have moved on over the last 20 years or so with the advent of non-linear editing. Editors used to have to physically splice film linearly using a razor blade, and find alternative takes from huge bins full of celluloid; now everything is done inside a system such as Avid or Final Cut, where every editorial option can be quickly auditioned. The same is true for music: we now have digital tools where a film-maker can reach out and touch every detail of the music before its finalised, and I think that's a very important part of the process now.'

Thomas Newman gathers a group of musicians into his studio to create beds of sound on top of which he'll add his themes

So today's film composers are no longer 'just' composers. To make their mock-ups sound as convincing as possible they also have to be recording mixers, engineers, orchestrators and producers. It's a steep learning curve if all you've ever done before is sit at a piano with pencil in hand.

A NEW SOUND WORLD

But the use of electronics goes way beyond these practical needs, and is now much more central to the craft of film composition itself. Composers today will try as much as possible to make some time for experimentation, for recording and making new sounds that are bespoke to the project in question. American Thomas Newman often gathers a small group of trusted musicians into his studio early on to create beds of sound (drones, pads, textures), on top of which he will then write and develop his themes, rather like a painter adding a wash of colour to a white canvas before filling in the detail. Dutch composer Tom Holkenborg, on the other hand, draws on his background in electronic dance music to create synthesised soundscapes, and also to transform and distort the sounds of traditional classical instruments *after* they have been recorded. Zimmer, meanwhile – who has proven to be a huge influence over the way that all media composers work today, thanks to his pioneering experiments in electronics and sampling – dedicated many months to noise and sound manipulation (producing more than 9000 bars of material) to arrive at the one perfect, ever-evolving tone that conveys the malevolent character of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008).

A natural upshot of today's film composers being adept in both classical orchestration and electronic, computer-based music, is the concept that all sound, regardless of its source, can now be treated equally. Although the use of non-Western instruments in Hollywood film scores has been common for decades, we are now truly in a place where some of the most genre-bending, experimental and open-minded music to be found anywhere in the world is being composed to accompany

films. The ‘appropriateness’ of a particular instrument’s sound within the context of the film is defined not by whether that instrument originally comes from the place being depicted in the film (although that can be a consideration), but rather by whether the colour of the instrument serves to tell the story. One particularly interesting example of this is the *duduk*, a double-reed instrument from Armenia possessing a mournful tone that has found a starring role in scores as diverse as Zimmer’s *Gladiator* (2000), Williams’s *Munich* (2005), John Debney’s *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) and James Horner’s *Avatar* (2009). And for a deep dive into modern, borderless film scoring, try Swedish composer Ludwig Göransson’s 2019 Oscar-winning soundtrack for *Black Panther* (2018; set in a fictional African kingdom of Wakanda), for which Göransson spent time exploring West African music and joining Senegalese singer Baaba Maal and his band on tour. The integration of traditional West African instruments with a 92-piece symphony orchestra and large choir, plus Maal’s extraordinary voice, is entirely coherent and convincing.

FROM COMPOSING TO RECORDING

But how much time do these composers have to conjure these alluring new sound worlds? As Wallfisch says, it can vary hugely: ‘On average we have probably around six to 12 weeks to compose the score, followed by another month or so to orchestrate, record and mix it. But you can have less time than that, and so you have to keep a strict quota of minutes to be written each day in order to hit the deadline.’

If that kind of hard-and-short deadline turns your brain to panic-induced mush then you are probably not destined to have



Ludwig Göransson worked with singer Baaba Maal for his *Black Panther* soundtrack



Tom Holkenborg taps into electronic music to create synthesised soundscapes

a long and successful career as a film composer. But if you’ve already landed a project, just where do you begin? Wallfisch confides: ‘Whether I have a year to think about the score, or I have to jump in straight away with four weeks to write everything, I try to spend at least a few days at the start writing music away from picture, developing theme suites and character ideas. It can prove to be totally invaluable having that arsenal of material ready to draw on when the pressure is on – and it’s normally always on.’

‘Even when I conduct my own scores, it’s more about phrasing and dynamics than changing the tempo’ – Benjamin Wallfisch

If you’ve ever watched footage of Williams conducting one of his scores in a recording studio, you may have noticed one key contrast with the way that soundtracks are typically recorded now: with Williams, none of the musicians would wear headphones – they would simply follow the conductor. Today, however, all of the musicians have at least one ear dedicated to following a click track. The click track is essentially the sound of a ticking electronic metronome that tells the musicians the precise tempo at any given moment. Wallfisch is a highly experienced conductor and I wonder how he feels about the use of click tracks in performance – can it make the music feel a bit less human? ‘Everything is normally written to the frame of picture, so even when I conduct my own scores, it’s more about facilitating the process of communicating the phrasing, dynamics and overall “performance” of the music to the orchestra, rather than changing the tempo,’ he says.

Having said that, Wallfisch is open to experimentation. ‘On occasion I’ll turn off the click track, and use the system of “streamers and punches” to sync to picture, a technique developed more than 80 years ago in film score recordings where conductors were guided on tempo and pace visually, by a system



Hans Zimmer's use of electronics and sampling has greatly influenced the industry

of lines and flashes on the screen giving them warnings and “hit points” for down-beats. A few years ago I started experimenting with rubato click tracks, where the subtle tendencies of rubato are programmed directly into the tempo map. Using this technique it’s possible to create a very free-sounding, rubato performance that might normally be heard without a click track, but with all the advantages you get when using a click track – for example, being able to overdub a choir or a massive battery of percussion on top of the orchestra at a later date.’

THE ‘TEMP LOVE’ TRAP

If you’ve ever sat in a cinema and thought, ‘That music sounds quite a lot like ...’, the reason is frequently not, as one might assume, the composer’s lack of originality, but instead the result of a phenomenon known as ‘temp’ music. This is pre-existing music (usually from other films) that is used through the post-production process to establish the mood and pace of the

The trouble is that, by the time the composer comes on board, the director may have grown fond of the temp music

scene, after which the composer is then effectively expected to replace the ‘temp’ music with an original score. This practice is perfectly understandable in theory, but the trouble is that, by the time the composer comes on board, the director and the producers have often grown rather fond of the ‘temp’ tracks (or have fallen into the ‘temp love’ trap, as it’s known in the industry) and it can be very difficult for a composer to dislodge it from their hearts. This results in the common scenario in which the composer feels obliged to write music that alludes closely to the spirit and even the rhythms, harmonies and melodies of ‘temp’ tracks.

Incidentally, the use of ‘temp’ music is not a new phenomenon. In one particularly painful example, American

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Although Wallfisch has his musicians wearing headphones with a click track during a recording session, occasionally he experiments by turning the click track off

Alex North was commissioned to compose the score for Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) only to have his music thrown out in the final stages of the production, with Kubrick opting to use the pre-existing works by Strauss and others which he had been using as a 'temp' score. As Kubrick explained: 'When you are editing a film, it's very helpful to be able to try out different pieces of music to see how they work with the scene ... Well, with a little more care and thought, these temporary tracks can become the final score.' North only discovered that his music had not been used in the movie when he attended the New York premiere of the film.

STAYING POSITIVE AND INSPIRED

For this and many other reasons, film composers need to be skilful politicians, able to persuade, to collaborate, to push their ego to the side, to stick to telling the story, and to help the director deliver his or her vision. And they have to live with the possibility that even the best composers may, at one stage or another, get fired.

In spite of dizzying technological advances and the speed of modern film-making, film composition is still very much alive

With all of these deadlines and pressures, how do film composers stay inspired? 'Every score starts with a blank page,' says Wallfisch, 'but I feel like each three- to four-month period working on a particular film score gives me that much more to say on the next one. It's the constant collaboration with other artists and always putting the story first that I think forces you constantly to up your game as a composer.'

Wallfisch's approach to film music should reassure us all that the craft of film composition, practised by composers for many decades (by Steiner, Korngold, Herrmann, Morricone, Williams

and more), is, in spite of dizzying technological advances and the speed of modern film-making, still very much alive. As Wallfisch says, 'It starts with hours of struggle in a darkened room to come up with stuff, and ends with collaborating with the most important people in the process: the musicians who bring it all to life.' 

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Five contemporary film scores with stand-out moments



Ludwig Göransson: *Black Panther* - 'Wakanda'

The fusion of Baaba Maal's glorious voice with African talking drums and a full symphony orchestra epitomises borderless film scoring where everything is possible. The score won an Academy Award this year, and rightly so.



Benjamin Wallfisch: *Shazam!* - 'SHAZAM!'

This is John Williams's *Superman* score on steroids – an astonishingly visceral piece of orchestration, and deliciously over-the-top. The recording is conducted by the composer himself.



Hans Zimmer: *The Dark Knight* - 'Why so serious?'

Many weeks of noise and sound manipulation led Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer to the apparently simple solution of fleshing out the Joker's character with a single tone. But what a tone.



Thomas Newman: *WALL-E* - '2815 AD'

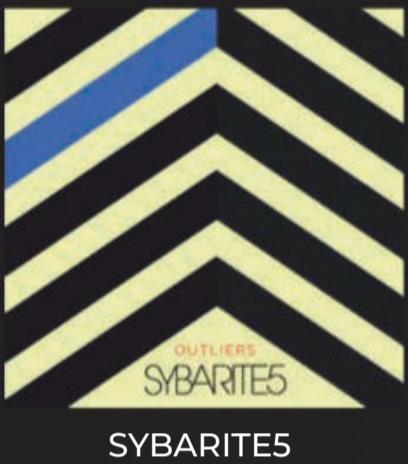
Thomas Newman uses real musicians throughout his compositional process, inviting players into his studio to build up layers of different live recordings in order to create an almost three-dimensional effect.



Tom Holkenberg: *Mortal Engines* - 'London Suite in C'

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Who is Kirill PETRENKO?

As he officially takes over at the Berliner Philharmoniker, what can we expect from the media-shy maestro? Hugo Shirley finds out from musicians who have worked with him

Ahead of Robin Ticciati's arrival as Chief Conductor of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin in spring 2017, posters popped up around the German capital with a picture of the young tousled-haired maestro. 'Wer ist Robin Ticciati?' ('Who is Robin Ticciati?'), they asked, giving curious Berliners a chance to find out at www.wer-ist-robin-ticciati.com. A couple of years earlier, many, at least outside Germany, could have done with a similar resource when Kirill Petrenko was announced as replacement for another tousled-haired Brit as the new Chief Conductor of Berlin's best-known orchestra.

Who was this Kirill Petrenko, the brilliant but reticent young conductor from Omsk who leapfrogged past the bookies' favourites – the controversial Christian Thielemann and the media-friendly Andris Nelsons – to take classical music's most prestigious post? Now that he's finally installed, his new orchestra has pulled out all the stops to try to tell us: a large banner on the Philharmonie announces his arrival with the strapline 'A new energy'; its website features an interview with its notoriously interview-averse new boss; its social media is pushing Digital Concert Hall playlists from the handful of concerts he's presided over. There's also a live recording of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony, which has been released on the orchestra's own label. It has already garnered an Editor's Choice in these pages (7/19), and has been made available for global streaming as well as in the usual luxury-hardback physical format.

The new recording is a much needed addition to a meagre discography: John Adams's *The Wound-Dresser* on the Berlin Philharmonic's label, a lone concerto with the LPO (to date, the only UK symphony orchestra Petrenko has conducted), rarely heard Suk tone poems and, from Frankfurt Opera, a live recording of Pfitzner's hardly less rarely heard *Palestrina*. The wily music lover will have sought out online broadcasts of shows from the Bavarian State Opera (the latest a wonderfully crystalline *Salome*), or a DVD of the house's *Lulu*. A filmed release of its *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, from his first season as the Munich house's Music Director (he took up the appointment in 2013), was pulled shortly before its due date.

Before Petrenko came to the BBC Proms last summer with the Berliners, his few UK appearances had barely registered. But anyone lucky enough to have seen him live in Munich, for example, or Bayreuth, where he was chosen to conduct Frank Castorf's anniversary-year production of the *Ring*, will have recognised particular hallmarks: a rare mix of meticulousness and spontaneity, allied to a quality that is hardly common in top conductors – a genuine humility and desire simply to serve the music. Watching him conduct you notice something else, too: a palpable pleasure and enjoyment in what he does.

It's an observation that Gerald Finley, the Iago in Munich's recent *Otello*, echoes when I speak to him about his experiences of working with Petrenko.

'This is actually one of the most extraordinary things about him,' he tells me.

'Rehearsals are demanding, and if he's not satisfied with a passage he will rehearse it

again and again, almost to make the musicians think, "Well, we're going to have a straitjacket here." But when we get to performances, suddenly there's this freedom and this spontaneity, and his joy of being a fellow musician really comes across.'

Franziska von Brück, flautist in the orchestra of the Komische Oper Berlin, has similar recollections of her earliest encounters with Petrenko, who was the house's music director from 2002 to 2007. 'You noticed very quickly that his special way of working was something different,' she recalls; 'the way he was going into the smallest details, totally true to the score but with a friendly manner that was never dictatorial. He didn't need much time to convince us. He was demanding of himself and just as demanding of us. But we were happy to try to fulfil his demands, even if it was hard work.'

Before his appointment to the Komische Oper, aged just 30, Petrenko had made a name for himself at the theatre in Meiningen (whose previous music directors include Hans von Bülow and Richard Strauss) with the feat of unveiling a new *Ring* on four consecutive evenings, with two different sets of orchestral personnel. Before that he had worked for two years as a Kapellmeister at Vienna's Volksoper, which he joined straight after finishing his studies in Vienna. Not since Karajan himself, arguably, has a conductor with such an operatic career path been appointed to the Berlin Philharmonic.

'It was a bold step going for a new and exciting adventure instead of choosing an established maestro' – Olaf Maninger, principal cello



PHOTOGRAPHY: WILFRIED HÖSL



'Skilled at making a good first impression': Kirill Petrenko as Chief Conductor-designate of the Berlin Philharmonic at last season's opening concert in August 2018

Born in 1972, Petrenko studied initially as a pianist in his native Russia and then moved to Austria with his violinist father and musicologist mother when he was 18. In retrospect, his rise to the top seems to have been both meteoric and quietly inevitable, each step up built on what feels like an uncanny ability to win over an orchestra quickly: there were only a couple of engagements with the Bavarian State Opera before he was offered the job, and only three concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic before his election there. He's clearly skilled at making a good first impression, as Finley, who first worked with him as far back as 2003 for a *Don Giovanni* at the Paris Opera, recalls: 'The one thing that was very clear from the beginning was his meticulous attention, first of all to the detail of the score. In his mind he had already formulated an idea of the sound that he wanted, and the Paris orchestra – not necessarily one for adapting to whatever instructions a conductor might offer – loved it: the sense of discipline, the sense of getting into a sound world, deep and rhythmic, that played to their strengths.'

Shirley Apthorp, Berlin-based critic of the *Financial Times*, remembers being similarly impressed by Petrenko's Mozart at the Komische Oper: 'I remember being very smitten by it – by the clarity of thought and the sense of excitement. He was someone everyone was watching with interest. You'd see his name and you'd want to hear the performance!' Olaf Maninger, a principal cellist in the Berlin Philharmonic, describes his own 'spectacularly special' first impression and remembers being bowled over by Petrenko's 'seriousness, his amazing emotionalism, mixed with control and perfectionism, the work ethic and the letting go in the moment of the concert'.

Maninger goes on to describe the process of the conductor's election to the Berlin Philharmonic post, which was finalised a few months after a long first voting session had led to no clear choice. 'It was surprising for the whole world, and for the orchestra itself it was a bold step that we didn't go for one of the older established maestros. We went for a totally new and exciting adventure instead.' Apthorp agrees: 'He was an absolute outsider for the position, and I think that was his saving grace,

because all of the other candidates were problematic in their own way. In the end we'll never really know what happened behind those closed doors, but we do know that it was extraordinarily close and a very hard-fought battle. And I feel that they made the better choice.' The orchestra is clearly excited, too, four years after the announcement was made, finally to begin working in earnest with their new man. 'The atmosphere is different with him,' another cellist tells me. 'You can hear a pin drop in rehearsals, with everyone always impatient to hear what he has to say – and he has a lot to say.'

But what can Berlin – and the musical world more broadly – expect from the Petrenko era? In 2010 a German newspaper dubbed this 'Wunder aus Sibirien' a 'master of the mainstream', and for many it will be a relief to have, in Petrenko, a conductor who can turn in thrilling, revelatory performances of the core German repertoire that his predecessor has not always been able to tackle convincingly – his track record in Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner and Strauss is impressive, and Franziska von Brück even mentions an exemplary Lehár *Das Land des Lächelns* at the Komische Oper. But Petrenko's own repertoire choices can be far from conventional: an early concert with his new orchestra featured Stravinsky, Scriabin and a rare violin concerto by Rudi Stephan; one of last year's tour programmes placed Franz Schmidt and Dukas with Prokofiev. Suk, a Petrenko favourite, features on a programme for this coming season.

One also has to wonder how the relationship between orchestra and conductor will develop once the honeymoon period is over. 'It will become more intimate,' says Maninger. 'We'll get to know him better, and we'll maybe get a bit more irritated by parts of one another, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.' Apthorp sounds a further note of caution regarding this famously strong-willed orchestra. 'With the Berlin Phil there's always the perilous question: how long will it take them to unsheathe their claws? I'm quite sure it won't be easy for him all the way, but let's hope that the friction results in even more interesting music-making.' It's a hope shared by Berlin, Germany and the whole of the musical world. 



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SEASON PREVIEW 2019-20

We bring you the very best classical music events and opera productions from across the UK, Europe, North America and even further afield in our annual guide to the new concert season

UNITED KINGDOM



The Academy of St Martin in the Fields with its Artistic Director, Joshua Bell; the ensemble is celebrating its 60th anniversary with a special concert at the QEH in November

Academy of Ancient Music

The Academy of Ancient Music reflects on the Beethoven 250 anniversary by combining the great master's music with that by one of his most neglected contemporaries: the Czech composer Jan Ladislav Dussek, whose Mass in C gets its first airing in Britain in modern times. Visitors over the course of the rest of the season include Mary Bevan, Viktoria Mullova and Jean Rondeau, who will direct from the harpsichord.

aam.co.uk

Academy of St Martin in the Fields

The orchestra founded by Neville Marriner celebrates 60 years this season, marking the anniversary on November 12 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with Beethoven's Symphony No 5, a new work by Sally Beamish and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto from Artistic Director, Joshua Bell.

asmf.org

Aurora

Fresh from performing Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* from

memory at the Proms, Aurora launches its season with the same work at various venues and ends it in May with Beethoven's *Eroica*, also from memory, in a concert where Pierre-Laurent Aimard will play the *Emperor Concerto*. Guest artists include Amy Dickson, Tom Poster and Natalie Clein.

auroraorchestra.com

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Wales will have its fair share of Beethoven 250 celebrations when

BBCNOW recreates the composer's famous 1808 concert and presents the *Missa solemnis* under Tadaki Otaka. Other season highlights include the world premiere of Karl Jenkins's Saxophone Concerto with soloist Jess Gillam, and Verdi's Requiem under the baton of Richard Farnes.

bbc.co.uk/bbcnow

BBC Philharmonic

Bridgewater Hall concerts in the new season include Joana Carneiro's

account of Mahler's Fifth, Bruckner's Fifth under Simone Young and, fresh from its Proms premiere, Finnish composer Outi Tarkiainen's *Midnight Sun Variations* under Principal Guest Conductor John Storgårds, in a concert that also includes the UK premiere of Kalevi Aho's Theremin Concerto.

bbc.co.uk/philharmonic

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Thomas Dausgaard presides over a season that will include a world premiere from his compatriot Bent Sørensen and a new work for the violinist Pekka Kuusisto by Enrico Chapel. The orchestra's principal horn player Alberto Menéndez Escribano will join Stuart Jackson for Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* while concerts dedicated to Heinz Holliger and music from Wagner's *Ring* surround the orchestra's first tour to Japan.

bbc.co.uk/bbcssso

BBC Singers

Sofi Jeannin enters her second season as Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers, opening with a concert that pivots on Messiaen's *Cinq Rechants* and also includes works by Erkki-Sven Tüür and Judith Weir. Elsewhere, Ben Palmer conducts an evening of Gerald Barry's music including his delicate psalm setting *O Lord How Vain*, and Schott & Sons, Mainz, his absurd, dramatic take on Beethoven's letters to his publisher.

bbc.co.uk/singers

BBC Symphony Orchestra

British operas bookend the BBCSO's season at the Barbican, which opens with a rare concert performance of William Alwyn's opera based on Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and ends with the first UK performance of Joby Talbot's *Everest*. The orchestra salutes the Beethoven anniversary with the UK premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang's concert-opera *Prisoner of the State*, inspired by Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

In his 11th season at the BSO, Kirill Karabits steers the orchestra through masterpieces from three centuries including a concert performance of Strauss's *Elektra* starring Catherine



Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in a spectacular centenary celebration this season

Foster. He will also explore the cultural influences of Weimar and conduct his first *Messiah* with the orchestra.

bsolive.com

Britten Sinfonia

The Cambridge-based orchestra explores what it means to be a refugee with a new song-cycle by Mark-Anthony Turnage, sung by Allan Clayton. There will be a performance of Britten's *Curlew River* featuring Ian Bostridge, and an evening of music for trumpet and orchestra from Purcell to Birtwistle via Scarlatti, with soloist Alison Balsom.

brittensinfonia.com

Cadogan Hall

The concert hall in SW1 hosts the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Guy Barker Jazz Orchestra, Trinity Laban Symphony Orchestra and more this season. The resident Royal Philharmonic Orchestra opens its Chelsea season with Kian Soltani's performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto under Jiří Rožer, who also conducts Dvořák's Symphony No 8 and Smetana's *Má vlast*.

cadoganhall.com

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

It's a big year for the CBSO as it celebrates its centenary season. Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla opens

proceedings with Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* and Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*; later on, she tackles Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* and Brahms - his symphonies and the *German Requiem*.

Soloists include Alison Balsom and Piotr Anderszewski.

cbsoco.uk

City of London Sinfonia

The season kicks off in October with 'The Fruit of Silence', a choral tour of cathedrals across the UK. Another themed programme, 'In Place and Time: Britten and TS Eliot' comes to Southwark Cathedral on November 20, interspersing Britten's *Frank Bridge Variations*, *Canticle V* and *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* with readings of TS Eliot's poems. The literary connection continues in December at the QEII, with a retelling of *Scheherazade* by authors from different backgrounds.

cityoflondonssinfonia.co.uk

Classical Opera & The Mozartists

Ian Page's company opens its season on September 19 at Wigmore Hall with a concert of Mozart arias, performed by soprano Regula Mühlemann, and Haydn's Symphonies Nos 6 and 80. Other highlights include concert performances of *Così fan tutte* in London, Birmingham and Sicily in November, a 'Mozart in Italy' weekend

at Cadogan Hall in March, and 'Mozart's Czech Mates' in July at the Wigmore. The Mozartists make their debut at La Seine Musicale in Paris in June 2020, in a programme of Mozart and Haydn's London works.

classicalopera.co.uk

English National Opera

Most recent Artistic Director Daniel Kramer bows out of ENO with his own production of Harrison Birtwistle's *The Mask of Orpheus* conducted by Martyn Brabbins. Other highlights include Barbora Horáková Joly's new production of *Luisa Miller*, a mouthwatering pairing of Corrine Winters and David Butt Philip in *Rusalka* and a revival of the ever-bankable Jonathan Miller production of *The Mikado*.

eno.org

English Touring Opera

ETO's autumn tour truck trundles from the Hackney Empire to Bath, Buxton, Durham, Aldeburgh, Lancaster and Saffron Walden throughout October and November, taking with it productions of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and Kurt Weill's *The Silver Lake*.

englishtouringopera.org.uk

Hallé Orchestra

The Hallé's Beethoven celebrations include a complete symphony cycle shared with the BBC Philharmonic

UNITED KINGDOM SEASON PREVIEW 2019-20



Leeds-based Opera North presents a typically eclectic season of Weil, Martinů and (pictured above) Handel's *Giulio Cesare*

and also a performance of the final act of *Fidelio* and the rare oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, both under Music Director Mark Elder. Alice Coote appears in three concerts, James Ehnes plays the Britten Violin Concerto and Elder turns his hand to complete concert performances of Puccini's tragic opera *Madama Butterfly*.

halle.co.uk

Kings Place

Kings Place has made a tremendous success of its 'Unwrapped' series which this year turns its attention to Venus – women in classical music as composers, performers, muses and more. The series includes visits from the Elias Quartet, cellists Zoë Keating and Natalie Clein, composer Caroline Shaw, Theatre of Voices, The Sixteen and the Royal Northern College of Music Orchestra visiting from Manchester.

kingsplace.co.uk

London Mozart Players

Following an opening gala at the newly refurbished Fairfield Halls on September 18, the LMP begin a jam-packed season which features soloists including Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Jess Gillam and Craig Ogden, and unmissable repertoire such as Haydn's *Creation*, Verdi's Requiem and a community production of Britten's *Noye's Fludde*.

londonmozartplayers.com

London Philharmonic Orchestra

The LPO concludes its British music series 'Isle of Noises' with works by Foulds, Walton and Vaughan Williams and a celebration of great British film scores. It then launches a new series, '2020 Vision', focusing on works written since the turn of the century. Vladimir Jurowski's concert performance of Wagner's *Ring* cycle continues with Siegfried.

lpo.org.uk

London Sinfonietta

London Sinfonietta presents exciting new works including Philip Venables's thought-provoking opera *Denis & Katya*, about a modern-day tragedy, Georg Friedrich Haas's world premiere in response to artist Bridget Riley and a commission from Norwegian saxophonist Marius Neset, as well as music by Harrison Birtwistle, Gerald Barry, Tansy Davies and others.

londonsinfonietta.org.uk

London Symphony Orchestra

Viola player Antoine Tamestit joins the LSO at the Barbican as part of his Artist Portrait tenure, while Simon Rattle, Gianandrea Noseda and François-Xavier Roth preside over a season exploring roots and origins and containing a fair amount of Beethoven. Meanwhile, Michael Tilson Thomas celebrates 50 years of working with the LSO.

iso.co.uk

Manchester Camerata

The Camerata's quest to perform all of Mozart's piano concertos and opera overtures in Manchester continues, with Gábor Takács-Nagy and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet returning to the Bridgewater Hall for a season opener which takes in Concertos Nos 8, 9 and 29. The season continues at Stoller Hall, the RNCM, the Town Hall and the Cathedral.

manchestercamerata.co.uk

Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras

The Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique's contribution to the Beethoven anniversary will include a full symphony cycle in the first half of 2020, visiting Barcelona, Chicago, New York and London's Barbican Centre. Meanwhile, sister ensembles the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists take their programme of Monteverdi, Domenico Scarlatti, Purcell and Carissimi on tour to Russia and Brazil.

monteverdi.co.uk

NYO of Great Britain

The National Youth Orchestra tours Hans Eisler's *Auf den Strassen zu Singen*, Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* and Shostakovich's cinematic Symphony No 11, *The Year 1905*, all under the charismatic Anglo-Spanish conductor Jaime Martín. There's also a Beethoven Ninth under Marin Alsop.

nyo.org.uk

Opera North

An eclectic season includes Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* and a new production of Martinů's *The Greek Passion* from Christopher Alden. The company also leaves Leeds to tour to Newcastle, Nottingham and Manchester

operanorth.co.uk

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Mendelssohn's *Elijah* under Masaaki Suzuki opens the OAE's season. Roger Norrington returns for Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 2 and 3, Iván Fischer conducts Mozart's last three symphonic scores and Geoffrey Paterson takes charge of a smorgasbord of works that reflect the Faust legend.

oae.co.uk

Philharmonia Orchestra

The Philharmonia's Weimar Berlin series spills into a second season, with a Berlin cabaret at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Principal Conductor Designate Santtu-Matias Rouvali focuses on Slavic repertoire with a complete *Swan Lake*, Prokofiev's Symphony No 5 and Khachaturian's Violin Concerto, joined for the latter by Nemanja Radulović.

philharmonia.co.uk

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

A decade after his last Mahler cycle on Merseyside, Vasily Petrenko returns to the symphonies, conducting all nine over the course of 2020. Mezzo Jennifer Johnston is Artist-in-Residence for the duration of the season, appearing in Handel's *Messiah* and Beethoven's Symphony No 9, while Sheku Kanneh-Mason is Young-Artist-in-Residence.

liverpoolphil.com

Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera presents Barrie Kosky's new *Agrippina* and a new *Jenůfa* from Claus Guth featuring Lithuanian soprano Asmik Grigorian, who makes her company debut in the title-role. Two Britten operas also receive new productions: *Death in Venice* and *The Turn of the Screw*.

roh.org.uk

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Robert Trevino conducts the season opener at the Royal Festival Hall



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Vaughan Williams / Rachmaninov / Britten / Shostakovich

7 & 8 October 2019
Mariinsky Orchestra/Gergiev

Matvey Demin flute / Mao Fujita piano
Rimsky-Korsakov / Ibert / Bizet-Borne / Berlioz / Tchaikovsky

10 October 2019
Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra

Alexandra Dariescu piano
Tchaikovsky / Rachmaninov / Khachaturian

30 October 2019
Flanders Symphony Orchestra

Miloš Karadagić guitar
Rossini / Rodrigo / Villa-Lobos / Falla / Bizet

12 November 2019
Prague Symphony Orchestra

Ester Pavlů mezzo-soprano
Mahler Symphony No. 3

29 January 2020
Orchestre National de Lille

Eric Lu piano
Ravel / Debussy / Beethoven

10 February 2020
Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Yeol Eum Son piano
Bizet / Ravel / Prokofiev / Anna Thorvaldsdóttir

13 March 2020
Swedish Philharmonia

Viktoria Mullova violin
Mendelssohn / Prokofiev / Sibelius

23 April 2020
Siberian Symphony Orchestra

Freddy Kempf piano
Shostakovich / Rachmaninov / Tchaikovsky

27 May 2020
St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra

Jennifer Pike violin
Prokofiev / Tchaikovsky

11 June 2020

Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra

Jean-Yves Thibaudet piano

Anna Clyne / Liszt / Mahler

Choral at Cadogan 2019–20

Wed 2 October

The Tallis Scholars

Rarely heard Palestrina alongside pieces by Byrd, Gallus and de Morales.

Tue 3 December

Westminster Cathedral Choir

A programme to celebrate Advent by composers from Tallis to Eric Whitacre.

Mon 16 – Tue 17 December

The Sixteen

Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, traditional Medieval carols and delights from Warlock and Walton.

Tue 18 February

Cupertinos

Experience the richness of 16th- and 17th-century Portuguese polyphony.

Thu 26 March

Danish National Vocal Ensemble

A cross-section of Danish music and motets by J.S. Bach from this group acclaimed for its pure Nordic sound.

Wed 29 April

The Cardinall's Musick

16th-century polyphony from Byrd and Gibbons alongside Tavener and Pärt.

Thu 21 May

The Gesualdo Six

Follow the evolution of the madrigal from Monteverdi to Ligeti.

Thu 18 June

The Tallis Scholars

Thomas Tallis' glorious *Spem in alium* for 40 voices.

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UNITED KINGDOM SEASON PREVIEW 2019-20

with an all-Russian programme that includes Shostakovich's Symphony No 5 and Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3. Another Russian fifth - Prokofiev's Symphony No 5 - follows later in the season under the baton of Principal Conductor Designate, Vasily Petrenko, who also presides over Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* in the spring.

rpo.co.uk

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Conductors Thomas Søndergård and Elim Chan have settled nicely into Glasgow and this season the former takes charge of big-boned masterpieces by Mahler and Strauss. Locals play a major role, with Artist-in-Residence Steven Osborne focusing on Beethoven and Nicola Benedetti giving her first account of Bartók's Violin Concerto No 2 on Scottish soil.

rsno.org.uk

Saffron Hall

Saffron Hall favourites the London Philharmonic Orchestra and its Chief Conductor Vladimir Jurowski are back at the hall in the autumn, while the orchestra returns later in the season, this time under Marin Alsop. Two BBC orchestras and the BBC Singers visit, as well as English Touring Opera, while Harry Christophers and The Sixteen present Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* just in time for Christmas.

saffronhall.com

Sage Gateshead/ Royal Northern Sinfonia

Music Director Lars Vogt launches the Royal Northern Sinfonia's season as soloist and conductor in Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 2 combined with Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6. Elsewhere, Paul McCreesh directs his speciality, Haydn's *The Creation*, Laurence Equilbey conducts a Schubert programme and there are visits from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Orchestre National de Lille.

sagegateshead.com

St John's Smith Square

From lunchtime recitals to large-scale events such as Brahms's Requiem, St John's Smith Square presents a variety of concerts to begin the season. Eric Whitacre conducts a concert and presents



Internationally sought-after cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason performs in Liverpool this season, having been made the RLPO's Young-Artist-in-Residence (see previous page)

a choral workshop in October, and there are a host of Christmas events to enjoy, including John Lubbock and the Orchestra of St John's annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*

sjss.org.uk

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Maxim Emelyanychev arrives at the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, sharing Beethoven anniversary duties with Emmanuel Krivine and Andrew Manze. Pekka Kuusisto is the season's Featured Artist, playing

works by Bach, Haydn, Beethoven and Sibelius as well as those by Nico Muhly and Bryce Dessner. Newly appointed Associate Composer Anna Clyne will unveil her first commission, while the orchestra will revive her Grammy-nominated *Prince of Clouds*.

sco.org.uk

Scottish Opera

A season highlight is John Fulljames's production of *Nixon in China*, first seen at the Royal Danish Opera in May; Joana Carneiro conducts.

Other highlights include Anthony Besch's *Tosca*, starring Natalya Romaniw, and a new production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Dominic Hill, conducted by Music Director Stuart Stratford.

scottishopera.org.uk

The Sixteen

The 2019 Choral Pilgrimage looks back at The Sixteen's last 40 years, placing music by Fayrfax - as included on the choir's first-ever recording - alongside a new work by James MacMillan. Surrounding these composers are many more, including Gabriel Jackson, Eric Whitacre, John Tavener and Philipp Sheppard. The pilgrimage visits venues from Truro to Edinburgh, taking in magnificent basilicas in Liverpool, Winchester and Durham.

thesixteen.com

Turner Sims

Southampton's concert hall welcomes the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera for a family concert as well as the Doric String Quartet, which plays Haydn, Britten and Schubert. Angela Hewitt visits to perform Bach's *English Suites* while the London Sinfonietta plays Reich and Glass - plus, an octet drawn from the London Mozart Players performs masterpieces of Viennese classicism.

turnersims.co.uk

Welsh National Opera

It may be WNO's first season without David Pountney, but the director is reunited with the Music Director he appointed in Cardiff, Tomáš Hanus, for his staging of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*. The season opens with Jo Davies's production of *Carmen* and James Macdonald's *Rigoletto*, starring Mark S Doss.

wno.org.uk

Wigmore Hall

Plenty of Beethoven will resound through the Wigmore Hall in this anniversary season, but the composer's music will be explored most deeply in a weekend of activities exploring themes as varied as revolution and the loss of hearing. The venue's season is also strong vocally, with visits from Bryn Terfel, Anna Caterina Antonacci, Susan Graham and Philippe Jaroussky.

wigmore-hall.org.uk

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Mon 23 Sep, 8.45pm
POST-SHOW CABARET
A free extravaganza hosted by Bourgeois & Maurice

Thu 26 Sep, 6pm
INSIGHTS TALK
Violinist Christian Tetzlaff explores Alban Berg's Violin Concerto

Thu 26 Sep, 7.30pm
ANGELS AND DEMONS
Concert featuring Berg's Violin Concerto and Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* symphony

Sun 29 Sep, 12 noon
INSIGHTS DAY: THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC
Speakers include novelist Theresia Enzensberger and historian Gavin Plumley

Sun 29 Sep, 7.30pm
THE PARTY'S OVER
Concert featuring Weill's Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra and Berg's *Lulu Suite*

philharmonia.co.uk/weimar_berlin

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BEETHOVEN / MASS IN C

23 Jan. 2020 : La Seine Musicale

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Carlus Padrissa / La Fura dels Baus, *stage design*

21, 22 Feb. 2020 : Aix-en-Provence, Grand Théâtre de Provence

26, 27 Feb. 2020 : La Seine Musicale

8, 9 May 2020 : Shanghai Concert Hall
13 May 2020, Shenzhen

16 May 2020 : Guangzhou

5 June 2020 : Dortmund Konzerthaus

EROÏCA

Beethoven, C. Schumann

23 Apr. 2020, La Seine Musicale

5 May 2020, Beijing

10 May 2020, Shanghai Concert Hall

MAGIC MOZART

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Cie 14:20, set design and new magic

26, 27, 28 June 2020 : La Seine Musicale

For any information or booking, please visit www.insulaorchestra.fr

NEW RECORDINGS

MAGIC MOZART (JUNE 2020)

CD - Excerpts from selected works

DER FREISCHÜTZ (2020)

CD & DVD of the 2019 Cie 14:20 production

Warner Classics - Erato

ALREADY AVAILABLE



EUROPE



Semyon Bychkov conducts the Czech Philharmonic in the opening concert of the orchestra's 124th season - Shostakovich's Eight Symphony - before heading to the Proms

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia

Berlioz's *Grande Messe de Morts* opens the season at Rome's Auditorium Parco della Musica under Pappano, followed a week later by the same composer's *Symphonie fantastique*. Principal Guest Conductor Mikko Franck conducts the Verdi Requiem and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and there are visits from Lahav Shani, Manfred Honeck, Gustavo Dudamel and Tan Dun, who conducts the Italian premiere of his own *Buddha Passion*.

santacecilia.it

Andermatt Music

Held at the newly opened Andermatt Concert Hall, the inaugural Andermatt Music season hosts 10 'New Generation Concert Series' from September to June 23 - nine recitals, and an orchestral concert to open the Andermatt Music Summer Festival 2020. There's also an Autumn Festival, (October 24-26) programmed by Lucerne Festival featuring the COE under Daniel Harding, and a four-day Beethoven-themed Winter Festival in January 2020, with Barenboim performing the opening concert.

andermattmusic.com

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Robin Ticciati conducts Sibelius's Symphony No 7, Herbert Blomstedt brings Mozart's Mass in C minor, Thomas Adès conducts his own Piano Concerto, John Eliot Gardiner interprets Holst's *The Planets*, while the boss himself, Mariss Jansons, opens up a world of Beethoven with the overtures, string concertos and orchestral incidental music.

br-so.com

Bavarian State Opera

The German-language premiere of Hans Abrahamsen's new opera *The Snow Queen* is presented in Munich in December, starring Barbara Hannigan, following its first performance in Copenhagen in October. The season also includes new productions of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and *Die tote Stadt*.

staatsoper.de

Bergen Philharmonic

Norway's oldest orchestra will augment certain concerts with a TED-Talk style series named 'Next Steps', in which researchers participate in concerts, examining aspects surrounding space, the oceans, climate change and human

existence. The performances include Mahler's Symphony No 4 and John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean*.

harmonien.no

Berlin Philharmonic

Kirill Petrenko's first season as Music Director will see him take on Zimmermann's *Caprichos Brasilieros*, Mahler's Symphony No 6 and Suk's Symphony No 2. Santtu-Matias Rouvali makes his debut with the orchestra in Sibelius's Symphony No 1 while Stefan Dohr is soloist in the world premiere of Hans Abrahamsen's Horn Concerto.

berliner-philharmoniker.de

Czech Philharmonic

The 124th season opens with Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony under Chief Conductor Semyon Bychkov, just a few days before they appear at the BBC Proms. To follow are Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* under Petr Altrichter in Prague and Bruckner's Symphony No 4 under Pablo Heras-Casado.

ceskafilharmonie.cz

Danish National Symphony Orchestra

Chief Conductor Fabio Luisi will conduct Nielsen's Symphonies

Nos 3 and 5, Langgaard's Symphony No 4 and the first act of Wagner's *Die Walküre* starring Lise Davidsen and Stephen Milling. In a season of big gestures, Alain Altinkimer will mastermind a concert performance of Debussy's *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian* and Gianandrea Noseda will do the same for Dallapiccola's *The Prisoner*, which will be recorded for release on Chandos.

drkoncerthuset.dk/dr-symfoni-orkestret

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen

There is an Anglo-Irish flavour to the Kammerphilharmonie's season opening in which Duncan Ward will conduct Gerald Barry's Organ Concerto with Thomas Trotter on the organ bench at Die Glocke. Elsewhere, Igor Levit plays Brahms's monumental Piano Concerto No 1, paired by Paavo Järvi with Haydn's *Drumroll* Symphony in a programme that will tour Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

kammerphilharmonie.com

Deutsche Oper Berlin

Rued Langgaard's apocalyptic opera *Antikrist* features in the Deutsche Oper Berlin's new season. Other premieres include *La forza del*



Pianist Yuja Wang is just one of many big names performing at Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie during the forthcoming season

destino directed by Frank Castorf, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Ted Huffman and *The Queen of Spades* from Graham Vick. But one event stands head and shoulders above all others: the commencement of Stefan Herheim's new *Ring*, with Music Director Donald Runnicles in the pit.

deutscheroperberlin.de

Elbphilharmonie

A host of big names are coming to Hamburg, including Yuja Wang, Jan Lisiecki and Grigory Sokolov in the piano recital series, and Christian Gerhaher, Anna Prohaska and Anne Schwanewilms in the song recital series. In addition to concerts from Alan Gilbert's resident NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra there are spotlights on Great Britain (featuring the CBSO) and Mieczysław Weinberg.

elbphilharmonie.de

Flanders Symphony Orchestra

Kristiina Poska makes her debut as Chief Conductor at the Concertgebouw Brugge on October 3, 2019, opening the new season with Brahms's Double Concerto and Second Symphony. The Estonian conductor presides over other concerts, too, including, in May, a programme featuring Schumann's Cello Concerto with soloist Johannes Moser. The season ends in June with Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, with soloist Pavel Kolesnikov under Valentin Uryupin.

symfonieorkest.be/en

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra

Andreas Staier gets the season going with Haydn, before Kristian Bezuidenhout directs an all-English programme of Purcell and Handel from the harpsichord, Trevor Pinnock is at the helm of a *Messiah* and Gottfried von der Goltz celebrates Beethoven in the form of the Seventh Symphony and music for *The Creatures of Prometheus*. The season ends with a celebration of Ascension with Bach, Telemann and Biber. Most concerts tour from Freiburg to Stuttgart and Berlin.

barockorchester.de

Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig

A focus on Weinberg will include chamber works, his violin and trumpet concertos and a visit from Weinberg champions Kremerata Baltica. Gewandhaus Kapellmeister Andris Nelsons takes charge of Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, Bruckner's Symphony No 8 and a major new work by the Franco-American composer Betsy Jolas.

gewandhausorchester.de

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

Santtu-Marias Rouvali's season begins with Shostakovich's Symphony No 5, continuing with Nielsen's Symphony No 5 and Sibelius's Symphony No 3. Elsewhere, Leif Ove Andsnes plays and directs an evening of Mozart, Nicola Benedetti champions Wynton Marsalis's new Violin Concerto, Jukka-Pekka Saraste

brings Mahler's Symphony No 9 to the Gothenburg Concert Hall and the orchestra embarks upon a major tour of Japan.

gso.se

Gran Teatre del Liceu

Season highlights at Barcelona's Liceu include the Catalan premiere of Jonathan Dove's *The Monster in the Maze*, a concert version of Rossini's *Semiramide* featuring Operalia laureate Levi Sekgapane alongside Joyce DiDonato, and Katharina Wagner's new production of her great-grandfather's *Lohengrin*. Damiano Michieletto's *Cav & Pag* transfers from Covent Garden via Gothenburg.

liceubarcelona.cat

Hungarian State Opera

Highlights of the new season include *The Magic Flute* (November 8-17) in a production, in Hungarian, by Miklós Szinetár, *Rigoletto* (November 7-24) and *La fanciulla del West* (November 13-24) – both in Italian; and *Porgy and Bess*, sung in English. The Christmas treat is *La bohème*, while *Die Fledermaus* ushers in the new year. More Mozart, plus Wagner's *Parsifal*, follows, while Strauss's *Die frau ohne Schatten*, sung in German, is one of the final operas of the season.

opera.hu

Iceland Symphony Orchestra

A tantalising prospect in the Iceland Symphony Orchestra's

new season is a performance of Daniel Bjarnason's new Piano Concerto *Processions*, conducted by the composer and featuring Vikingur Olafson as soloist. Sibelius is a strong thread in the season, with the First and Fifth Symphonies, Violin Concerto (featuring Augustin Hadelich) and *Lemminkäinen Suite*, the latter offering a sneak peek at the orchestra's Chief Conductor from 2020, Finn Eva Ollikainen.

en.sinfonia.is

Insula Orchestra

Insula Orchestra presents a feast of music inspired by Scotland from the pens of composers Gade, Mendelssohn and Beethoven before inviting the Royal Scottish National Orchestra to play as a guest. Other highlights from the orchestra itself include a concert performance of Weber's *Die Freischütz*, Beethoven symphonies and his Mass in C, and a cabaret evening on the theme of 'Magic Mozart'.

insulaorchestra.fr

Philharmonie de Luxembourg

'Grands rendez-vous' is the season's theme at the Philharmonie where concerts from its home orchestra, the Luxembourg Philharmonic, include Bruckner's Eighth Symphony under Paavo Järvi, Mahler's Fifth with Daniel Harding and Rossini's *Stabat mater* from Gustavo Gimeno. Visiting ensembles include the New York Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the Philharmonic Orchestra of La Scala, Milan.

philharmonie.lu

Mariinsky Theatre

The season opens with Tchaikovsky's *The Enchantress* in David Pountney's production conducted by Valery Gergiev and ends seven months later with a concert performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada*, marking 175 years since the composer's birth. In between are revivals of the company's classic *Lohengrin*, *Iołanta*, *War and Peace*, *Turandot*, *Rigoletto*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Elektra*, *Betrothal in a Monastery*, *The Golden Cockerel* and more.

mariinsky.ru/en

Munich Philharmonic

The major feature of the season is Valery Gergiev's Bruckner cycle,

which launches with the Sixth Symphony and takes in the rest in rapid succession. Rafael Payare, Susanna Mälki, Semyon Bychkov, Karina Canellakis and Andrew Manze are among the guest conductors at the Gasteig, the latter taking charge of three performances of Handel's *Messiah* just in time for Christmas.

mphil.de

Müpa Budapest

There will be Mahler from both the Berlin and Israel Philharmonics at Müpa this season, while Rudolf Buchbinder appears with the Staatskapelle Dresden, and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zürich is joined by clarinettist Martin Fröst. The Vocal Cords series includes recitals from Rolando Villazón and Waltraud Meier. And no Müpa season is complete without a new account of *The Ring*.

mupa.hu

Opéra de Paris

New productions include Borodin's *Prince Igor* from Barrie Kosky, Massenet's *Manon*, Verdi's *La traviata* and a new *Ring* from Calixto Bieito conducted by Music Director Philippe Jordan. There are revivals of Reimann's *Lear*, Bellini's *Il pirata*, Verdi's *Don Carlo* and Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffman*.

operadeParis.fr

Orchestre Philharmonique

Royal de Liège

The season opens on September 27 with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, conducted by Gergely Madaras. This is followed by an unmissable all-Vivaldi programme, including the *Gloria* and the *Magnificat*, from Le Concert Spirituel under Hervé Niquet. There's also a recital by Simon Trpčeski and a Mahler 7 from Alexandre Bloch and his Orchestre National de Lille, both in October and worth catching. Rounding up the close of the season in May 2020 are performances of Brahms's *German Requiem* and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, *Pathétique*.

oprl.be

Orchestre de Paris

The season begins under Karina Canellakis's baton with Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No 2 and Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Evgeny Kissin joins the orchestra and Robert Trevino for Liszt's Piano

Concerto No 2 while there are also visits from Sakari Oramo conducting Magnus Lindberg's *Accused* and former chiefs Paavo Järvi and Daniel Harding conducting Strauss and Mendelssohn respectively.

orchestredeparis.com

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande

Artists ranging from Asmik Grigorian and Sergey Khachaturyan to Leonidas Kavakos and Renaud Capuçon join the OSR this season, with Chief Conductor Jonathan Nott leading a pack that includes Kazushi Ono, Lionel Bringuier, Bertrand de Billy and rising star Andris Poga. Yann Robin is Composer-in-Residence for the duration of the season at Victoria Hall in Geneva.

osr.ch

Oslo Philharmonic

The Oslo Philharmonic's centenary season launches with a new work by Øyvind Torvund after which Vasily Petrenko will conduct Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5. Norwegians Lise Davidsen, Truls Mørk and Leif Ove Andsnes are all soloists for the birthday concert on September 28. In February, Petrenko's future successor Klaus Mäkelä takes the orchestra through Ravel's *La valse* and Esa-Pekka Salonen's Cello Concerto with Mørk as soloist.

ofo.no

Palau de la Música

The centrepiece of the Catalan venue's season is a complete Beethoven symphony cycle from John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique. There will also be visits from the LSO under Simon Rattle, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra under Alan Gilbert, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel and the Gabrieli Consort and Players under Paul McCreesh. There is plenty more to savour, too, from the resident Barcelona Symphony Orchestra.

palaumusica.cat

Palazzetto Bru Zane

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, the Palazzetto Bru Zane kicks off the season in Venice with a concert of chamber music and art songs from Véronique Gens and the I Giardini ensemble, as well as in Paris with a gala of orchestral music and opera ►

Gergely Madaras,
Music Director

- The Firebird
- Renaud Capuçon
- Balkan Fever
- Boléro
- Romeo & Juliet
- Philip Glass / Steve Reich
- October Revolution
- Pathétique Symphony
- La La Land
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under Hervé Niquet. There is also a special focus on Reynaldo Hahn.
bru-zane.com

Pierre Boulez Saal

The season includes a Schubert Week, immersions in the music of Boulez, Ligeti, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya and Daniel Barenboim's traversal of Beethoven's complete piano and violin sonatas (with Pinchas Zuckerman), as well as festivals of Arabic music and concerts for families and children, all benefiting from the auditorium's unique 'in the round' architecture.

boulezsaal.de

Il Pomo d'Oro

The Greek period-instrument ensemble will continue to tour with Joyce DiDonato and her *War and Peace* programme, visiting numerous cities in South America and the USA.

il-pomodoro.ch

Rotterdam Philharmonic

Valery Gergiev conducts the season's opening concert on September 12 in a programme featuring Debussy's *La mer* and Ravel's *Boléro*. Other standout concerts include Leila Josefowicz performing John Adams's Violin Concerto, and two Sibelius programmes under Jukka-Pekka Saraste. In February 2020, there's a much-anticipated Mahler 5 conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

rotterdamsphilharmonisch.nl

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

The season opens under Franz Welser-Möst, who conducts an all-Tchaikovsky evening with Janine Jansen in the Violin Concerto. Later on Myung-Whun Chung conducts Mahler's Symphony No 9. Trevor Pinnock takes charge of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and past Music Director Mariss Jansons returns with Strauss, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Beethoven.

concertgebouworkest.nl

Royal Stockholm Philharmonic

Baiba Skride introduces a new violin concerto by Victoria Borisova-Ollas at the season's opening concert at the Konserthuset, before Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo conducts Bruckner's Symphony No 4. Elsewhere there is Elgar, Clara Schumann, Mahler's



Cellist Sol Gabetta is the new Artist-in-Residence at Staatskapelle Dresden

Resurrection Symphony No 2, and Nicola Benedetti in Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No 2.

konserthuset.se

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra

Chief Conductor Jaime Martín presides over his inaugural season in Dublin, which will see him conduct Mahler's Symphony No 3, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Beethoven's Symphony No 3, Shostakovich's Symphony No 10, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. Robert Trevino conducts Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* while Principal Guest Conductor Nathalie Stutzman goes big with Strauss and Bruckner.

orchestras.rte.ie

St Petersburg Philharmonic

The season opens in September with the 12th Elena Obraztsova Competition for young singers, before Jan Latham-Koenig conducts a programme of Britten, Vaughan Williams and Rachmaninov. Felix Korobov, Vladimir Popov, Nikolay Alexeev and others take to the podium thereafter while Music Director Yuri Temirkanov conducts Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 1 on the composer's birthday.

philharmonia.spb.ru

Semperoper Dresden

New productions in Dresden include Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims*

directed by Lauri Scozzi, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* directed by Jens-Daniel Herzog (with Christian Thielemann in the pit), Calixto Bieito's production of Ligeti's *Le grand macabre* and a new *Madama Butterfly* directed by Amon Miyamoto.

semperoper.de

Staatskapelle Dresden

Sol Gabetta is Artist-in-Residence for the 2019-20 season, during which she will play the Schumann, Saint-Saëns and Shostakovich First Concertos. Aribert Reimann contributes three works as Composer-in-Residence, including a new score in memory of Robert Schumann, while Music Director Christian Thielemann focuses on the season's big anniversary composer, Beethoven.

staatskapelle-dresden.de/en/

Tapiola Sinfonietta

The Tapiola Sinfonietta embarks upon a thorough programme, ranging from chamber music to Bizet's *Carmen*. The ensemble collaborates with several widely respected soloists, including soprano Carolyn Sampson and violinist Rachel Podger.

tapiolasinfonietta.fi/en

Les Talens Lyriques

In a season titled 'The Nations', Christophe Rousset's ensemble

will celebrate European diversity. Works by Johann Sebastian and Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach will join those by Handel to prove just to what extent composers of the Baroque could adapt their styles to different lands, and the ensemble will play for Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in the pit of the Paris Opera. It will also travel from Colombia to Japan on tour.

lestalenslyriques.com

Teatro alla Scala

The season in Milan opens with Davide Livermore's *Tosca* under Riccardo Chailly's baton. Later highlights include Damiano Michieletto's production of *Salomè*, Robert Carsen's *Semele* and two productions from the collective La Fura dels Baus: Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, conducted by Adám Fischer and Carlo Rizzi.

teatroallascala.org/en

Teatro Real

Domingo, DiDonato, Camarena and Jaroussky are among the headline names this season at Madrid's Royal Theatre, while new productions include Reimann's *Lear*, Mascagni's *Iris*, Bellini's *Il pirata* and a rare outing in Spain for Weinberg's *The Passenger*. *The Ring* continues with *Die Walküre*.

teatro-real.com

Vienna Philharmonic

Daniel Harding opens the season at the Musikverein with Sibelius's Symphony No 4. Later in the season, Valery Gergiev conducts Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, Christoph Eschenbach takes charge of Schoenberg's arrangement of Brahms's Piano Quartet No 1, Matthias Goerne sings Mahler songs and Christian Thielemann presents Bruckner's Symphony No 8.

wienerphilharmoniker.at

Vienna Staatsoper

Hindemith's *Cardillac* makes a rare appearance at the Staatsoper this season in a production by Sven-Eric Bechtolf conducted by Michael Boder. Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Olga Neuwirth's *Orlando*, Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* and Eötvös's *Tri Sestri* are on the bill in a season that includes a full *Ring* cycle.

wiener-staatsoper.at

2019–20 concert season

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von Eckardstein ————— Miloš Karadaglić
————— Kristiina Poska Chief Conductor of the
Flanders Symphony Orchestra —————
Jonathon Heyward ————— Adrien
Perruchon ————— Pierre Bleuse

www.symphonieorkest.be

The Flanders Symphony Orchestra is in residence at Muziekcentrum De Bijloke, Ghent (member of the UNESCO Creative Cities of Music Network), and receives support from the Flemish Government and the City of Ghent



Hear it happen in Rotterdam



With Lahav Shani following in the footsteps of Valery Gergiev and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Rotterdam Philharmonic continues to electrify with irresistible intensity.

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www.rpho.nl/en

NORTH AMERICA



The legendary pianist Mitsuko Uchida performs the complete Schubert piano sonatas at Severance Hall - a highlight of the Cleveland Orchestra's forthcoming season

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

The BSO's season opens at Meyerhoff with a fate-themed concert conducted by Music Director Marin Alsop, beginning with Verdi's overture to *La forza del destino* and ending with Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4. Later in the season Alsop conducts Brahms, Wagner, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, a world premiere from Lera Auerbach and Mahler's Symphonies Nos 3 and 4.

bsomusic.org

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Andris Nelsons's sixth Boston season extends his Shostakovich symphony cycle (while even inviting his 'other' orchestra, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, literally to join in) and includes a concert performance of Act 3 of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* starring Jonas Kaufmann. Nelsons will be on the podium for the first performances of BSO commissions from HK Gruber, Betsy Jolas, Arturs Maskats and Eric Nathan.

bso.org

Canadian Opera Company

The new season at the Four Seasons Centre opens with Robert Wilson's new production of *Turandot* conducted by Carlo Rizzi, starring Tamara Wilson, Joyce El-Khoury and Sergey Skorokhodov. Christopher Alden's staging of *The Flying Dutchman* is conducted by COC's Music Director Johannes Debus, who is also in the pit for a new production of *Hansel and Gretel* from Joel Ivany.

coc.ca

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti will conduct the Beethoven symphonies in his own 10th anniversary year at the CSO, while pianists from Pollini to Levit will take on the concertos and complete piano sonatas. Elsewhere, Gergiev will take care of Shostakovich's *Leningrad* Symphony, Susanna Mälkiä conducts Mahler's Symphony No 4, Blomstedt brings Brahms, and there are visits from Ray Chen, Yo-Yo Ma, Christian Tetzlaff, Julia Fischer, Anne-Sophie Mutter and Leonidas Kavakos.

cso.org

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

The US premiere of Cincinnati native Bryce Dessner's Concerto for Two Pianos opens the season. Anne-Sophie Mutter appears in Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Paulo Bortolameolli conducts Schumann's oratorio *Paradise and the Peri* with the May Festival Chorus, Music Director Louis Langrée conducts an evening of song with Renée Fleming, and the orchestra's 125th anniversary concert includes Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* and a new work by Icelandic composer Daníel Bjarnason.

cincinnatisymphony.org

Cleveland Orchestra

Yuja Wang takes on Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 4 at Severance Hall under Lorenzo Viotti, and there's a Schubert theme with the 'Great' Symphony from Music Director Franz Welser-Möst and the piano sonatas from Mitsuko Uchida. As a season finale, Welser-Möst conducts concert performances of Berg's *Lulu* (in its 1937 two-act version) with Barbara Hannigan.

clevelandorchestra.com

Dallas Opera

Trusty favourites *The Magic Flute* and *The Barber of Seville* bookend the season in Dallas but there are some rarities in between, including Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel*, and a meeting of Stravinsky's 'ballet with song' *Pulcinella* with Poulenc's monologue telephone opera *La voix humaine*, the latter staged by and starring Patricia Racette.

dallasopera.org

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Major works in the new season include Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Handel's *Messiah*, Dvořák's Symphony No 9, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, but the season opens with a celebration of 100 years of Detroit's beautiful Orchestral Hall conducted by Michael Francis and including Beethoven's Symphony No 5. Joshua Bell, Alisa Weilerstein and Fabien Gabel are among the visiting artists.

dso.org

Handel and Haydn Society

Mozart is a strong presence this season from Boston's early music ensemble. The composer's *Jupiter* Symphony will be conducted by Bernard Labadie, and his Mass in C minor and Violin Concerto No 4 by Music Director Harry Christophers, while his Symphony No 36 falls to the guiding hands of Kristian Bezuidenhout. Baroque staples Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* are also on the schedule.

handelandhaydn.org

LA Opera

Transfers to LA include Adam Guettel's musical *The Light in the Piazza* (from London and elsewhere) starring Renée Fleming, and Barrie Kosky's production of *La bohème* from the Komische Oper Berlin. Kosky's *The Magic Flute* is also revived, as is David McVicar's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Filmmaker James Gray directs a new production of *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

laopera.org

LA Phil

Entering its second century, the LA Phil plays Beethoven, Bruckner, Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, Copland and John Adams in the autumn, all under the baton of Music Director Gustavo Dudamel, who welcomes guest soloists Yuja Wang, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Seong-Jin Cho. On the anniversary of its actual founding in October, the orchestra will premiere a new work, requiring three conductors, by Icelandic composer Daniel Bjarnason.

laphil.com

Lyric Opera of Chicago

The main event this season is the conclusion of David Pountney's new *Ring* cycle conducted by Music Director Andrew Davis, which reaches its *Götterdämmerung* and is also given in full. Other works include Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and productions of *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly* and *The Barber of Seville*.

lyricopera.org

Metropolitan Opera

New productions of *Porgy and Bess*, *Wozzeck* and *The Flying Dutchman*

are made at the Met by directors James Robinson, William Kentridge and François Girard respectively. Gergiev helms the *Dutchman*, starring Bryn Terfel and Anja Kampe, while Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts three productions including *Wozzeck*. Simon Rattle is in the pit for a revival of Robert Carsen's *Der Rosenkavalier*.

metopera.org

Minnesota Orchestra

Thirteen guest conductors join Osmo Vänskä for the season in Minnesota, while Associate Conductor Akiko Fujimoto makes her debut in the subscription series. A season highlight is Mahler's Symphony No 3, which will be recorded for BIS, and the orchestra gives the US premiere of Brett Dean's Cello Concerto, performed by Alban Gerhardt. The season also launches a new Rachmaninov project with pianist Kirill Gerstein.

minnesotaorchestra.org

Orchestra Symphonique de Montréal

Kent Nagano's final season as Music Director includes a Schubert festival comprising a complete cycle of the composer's symphonies, all under Nagano's baton. He also takes on Shostakovich's Symphony No 13, Mahler's Symphony No 5 and Bruckner's Symphony No 4.



Conductor Kent Nagano celebrates his final season as Music Director in Montreal with an ambitious Schubert festival

A festival of Spanish music will see Juanjo Mena and friends play music by composers from Spain and those influenced by the country across three concerts in the spring.

osm.ca

National Arts Center

Music Director Alexander Shelley will lead a performance of Verdi's Requiem at the start of the season, which will continue to include a festival featuring the music of John Williams, and visits from Joshua Bell (playing the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto) and the Canadian-Israeli composer Avner Dorman's new Double Concerto for Violin and Cello.

nac-cna.ca

National Symphony Orchestra

Music Director Gianandrea Noseda opens the season with a concert of symphonic works inspired by jazz, before tackling Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Act 3 of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (with Stephen Gould and Christine Goerke), Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and Mahler's Symphony No 4. There are celebrations for Leonard Slatkin's 75th birthday and a complete Beethoven symphony cycle.

kennedy-center.org

New York Philharmonic

Over the course of the season, Jaap van Zweden's orchestra

presents 19 commissioned works celebrating 100 years of the American constitution's 19th Amendment. There are 'city hot-spot' focuses on Berlin and Reykjavík, concert performances of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* starring Nine Stemme, and multiple appearances from Artist-in-Residence Daniil Trifonov. The orchestra also celebrates New York through the eyes of sometime resident, Gustav Mahler.

nyphil.org

Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin's orchestra offers subscribers the chance to 'binge' on Beethoven's complete symphonies and piano concertos in concentrated cycles, with soloists for the latter including Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman and Daniil Trifonov. A 'WomenNOW' strand will focus on female composers, conductors, soloists and thinkers.

philorch.org

Pittsburg Symphony Orchestra

'We all need to share love, laughter, sadness and joy,' says Manfred Honeck of his new season, in which one strand will pit violin concertos by Mozart against those by more recent composers. Honeck conducts Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 3 and 7 at Heinz Hall, as well as Bruckner's Seventh and Prokofiev's ▶



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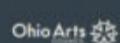
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Romeo and Juliet, both of which will be recorded. In addition, Jakub Hrúša and Matthias Pintscher both make their podium debuts.

pittsburghsymphony.org

St Louis Symphony

America's second-oldest symphony orchestra enters its 140th season, welcoming Stéphane Denève as Music Director, who will spend 12 weeks on the podium, and will be joined by his compatriot Jean-Yves Thibaudet as Artist-in-Residence. One of Denève's big dates is with Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*; the charismatic French conductor will also be introducing St Louis audiences to composer Guillaume Connexion, whose music he has championed for many years.

slos.org

San Francisco Symphony

In his 25th and final season at the helm of the San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson-Thomas will place a resounding full stop at the end of his long exploration of Mahler; he conducts Mahler's Symphonies Nos 6 and 8 and *Das Knaben Wunderhorn*. Julia Bullock, Sasha Cooke and Anne-Sophie Mutter are Artists-in-Residence.

sfsymphony.org

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis stewards the TSO for a season while it awaits incoming Music Director Gustavo Gimeno, taking care of the orchestra's Beethoven 200 celebrations that will include Symphonies Nos 5-8 and Piano Concertos Nos 3-5. There is a taste of things to come as Gimeno

visits for a Russo-French ballet programme and a Brahms-fest set to include both piano concertos under the fingers of Yuja Wang.

tso.ca

Tafelmusik

Elisa Citterio's third season at Canada's period-instrument orchestra will include her own new orchestral arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Tchaikovsky on period instruments, six new commissions by living composers, a European tour and a recording - Citterio's first since she joined.

tafelmusik.org

Seattle Symphony

Thomas Dausgaard brings his flair for unusual musical connections to the Seattle Symphony. Thus,

the orchestra will pair Beethoven symphonies with new works, often composed or created by local-community musicians.

The season also includes music by Lotta Wennäkoski and Olga Neuwirth, symphonies by Mahler and Nielsen, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Bernstein's *Songfest*.

seattlesymphony.org

Washington National Opera

Otello opens the season in Washington in a revival of David Alden's production, conducted by Danielle Callegari and starring Russell Thomas in the title-role. The season continues with *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*. In a new initiative, the WNO will also present three brand-new 20-minute operas.

kennedy-center.org

REST OF THE WORLD

Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra

The season kicks off with a celebration of 70 years of the People's Republic of China. Guest artists for the 20 subscription concerts include Charles Dutoit, Eliahu Inbal, Midori, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Stephen Hough, Jian Wang, Renée Fleming and Edita Gruberova, and there is a focus on Beethoven in his anniversary year.

gso.org.cn/en

Hong Kong Philharmonic

Jaap van Zweden launches the season with a Russian programme including Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 and excerpts from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, before conducting Verdi's Requiem at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. He returns for Shostakovich's Ninth, Prokofiev's Fifth and Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies.

hkphil.org

NHK Symphony Orchestra

Lutosławski's *Concerto for Orchestra* opens the season in Tokyo with a splash, and Paavo Järvi goes on to conduct symphonies by Mahler, Sibelius and Shostakovich. Herbert Blomstedt returns for Mozart's Mass in C minor and Fabio Luisi takes on Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, while Rafael Payare, Leonard Slatkin, Kent Nagano and Jukka-Pekka Saraste are among the other guest conductors.

nhkso.or.jp



Violinist Rachel Barton Pine is Artist-in-Residence with the Singapore Symphony

Royal Opera House Muscat

Carmen from the Teatro Colón Buenos Aires, the Opéra de Monte Carlo's *La bohème*, Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* performed by the Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège and Davide Livermore's *The Magic Flute* all grace the Muscat stage. Meanwhile, the season of concerts includes visits from the Philharmonic Orchestra of

La Scala under Myung-Whun Chung, the LSO under Gianandrea Noseda and the Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre under Philipp Chizhevsky.

rohmuscat.org.om

Shanghai Symphony Orchestra

Highlights of the season include semi-staged performances of *La Damnation de Faust* and

Semele, the Chinese premiere of Shostakovich's Symphony No 13 conducted by Krzysztof Penderecki, and a focus on composer Zhou Tian. Visiting artists and orchestras include the LSO/Simon Rattle, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra/Riccardo Chailly, and Collegium Vocale Gent.

sh-symphony.com

Singapore Symphony

Violinist Rachel Barton Pine is Artist-in-Residence for the season. Themes include: a British strand that will explore seafaring; 'Voices of a City', which will focus on music written in Singapore, New York, Leipzig and Dresden; and a series, 'Nature and the Universe', celebrating such phenomena as the aurora borealis and the make-up of the solar system through musically related works.

sso.org.sg

Suntory Hall

A season celebrating historic links between Japan and Austria will see the Vienna Philharmonic visit Tokyo for a week-long residency under Andrés Orozco-Estrada and Christian Thielemann; the Orchestra of the Vienna Volksoper is participating, too. In addition to other visiting ensembles including the Leipzig Gewandhaus, local orchestras offer a rich programme, including a concert performance of George Benjamin's opera *Written on Skin*.

suntory.com

GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Michelle Assay is thrilled to hear Denis Kozhukhin bring creative and imaginative insights to familiar miniatures by Mendelssohn and Grieg



Grieg · Mendelssohn

Grieg Lyric Pieces: Op 12 - No 1, Arietta; No 2, Waltz; No 4, Elves' Dance; Op 38 - No 4, Dance; No 6, Elegy; Op 43 - No 1, Butterfly; No 4, Little Bird; No 6, To Spring; Elegy, Op 47 No 7; Op 54 - No 3, March of the Trolls; No 4, Notturno; No 5, Scherzo; Brooklet, Op 62 No 4; Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op 65
No 6 Mendelssohn Songs without Words: Op 19 - Nos 1, 2, 3 & 5; Op 30 - Nos 2 & 6; Op 38 - Nos 2 & 6; Op 62 No 3; Op 67 - Nos 2 & 4; Op 102 No 3

Denis Kozhukhin pf

Pentatone PTC5186 754 (66' • DDD/DSD)

Once in a while a piano recording comes along that really plucks at the heart-strings. Denis Kozhukhin's compilation of miniatures by Mendelssohn and Grieg is one such. First prize-winner at the 2010 Queen Elisabeth Competition and third prize-winner in 2006 at Leeds, the Russian has already proved – most memorably in his concerto debut recording of Grieg and Tchaikovsky (5/16) – that he has the ability to illuminate familiar, over-played pieces with his imaginative musicality. Now, in deceptively straightforward repertoire, we get a subtler but if anything even more delicious taste of his creative and poetic pianism.

As Harriet Smith has put it, if listened to en bloc, there can be a danger of aural toothache with Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, even when delivered by the finest hands. Well, either I have developed a terribly sweet tooth or else Kozhukhin is even finer than his rivals, because I only wish he had recorded the whole lot, so that I could savour them all in one continuous binge. Kozhukhin has converted even a slight Mendelssohn-sceptic like me (in particular when it comes to these miniatures) not just to yield



'Kozhukhin's choice of Songs without Words is exquisite – it's as though he has devised a secret neo-Schubertian song-cycle'

to them as a listener but to want to take them straight to the piano and play them through. He brings to the table a perfect balance between spontaneity and control,



Denis Kozhukhin creates unique expressive sound worlds

teamed with infinite variety of touch and timbre. Every phrase is imbued with sensitivity and luminous beauty. Even when the textures are apparently similar (as, say, in the first two items on the disc), he succeeds in placing each piece in its own unique expressive world and sonic landscape.

I don't think I've ever heard so much Schubert in Mendelssohn's Songs. In the dreamiest numbers, such as the famous 'Venetianisches Gondellied', Kozhukhin keeps a more natural momentum even than, say, Javier Perianes (subject of HS's glowing review: *Harmonia Mundi*, 12/14), avoiding sentimentality but without ever compromising the mood of reverie. Unlike Perahia (Sony Classical, 3/00) – few finer hands than his, you would think – Kozhukhin doesn't rush in the interests of agitation. Compare his haunting take on Op 30 No 2, where every Schubertian turn is savoured and every phrase allowed to be sung through. And if Barenboim's enthralling account of this Song (DG) seems to come straight out of the feverish world of 'Erlkönig', Kozhukhin's has the subtler allure and fatalism of the first of Schubert's late *Three Pieces*, D946.

It's not just the interpretations but also Kozhukhin's choice of Songs that is exquisite. It's as though he has devised an overall narrative – a secret neo-Schubertian song-cycle, perhaps. How profoundly touching, for instance, to place the wandering and nostalgic Op 67 No 2 right after the funeral-march Op 62 No 3. And with the brilliant 'Spinnerlied' and finally the deceptively naive 'Kinderstück', Kozhukhin as it were adds three dots to the finality of death: death as our 'wedding with eternity' (who would have thought that these simple, intimate pieces



Creative and poetic pianism: Denis Kozhukhin's exploratory musicality illuminates the music of Grieg and Mendelssohn

could evoke the most profound of Rumi's mystic odes?). Every choice of timbre, tempo and agogic inflection seems to point up the dramatic and musical connections that hold the entire selection of Songs together.

Kozhukhin's pick of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* is equally inspired. Again we have not just a randomly varied assembly of pieces but an over-arching story. Kozhukhin is responsive not only to the Griegian sound world but also to the individual character of each piece, giving due place to fantasy and a touch of the fairy-tale. Even at third or fourth hearing, new expressive turns and visionary interpretative choices emerge. Listen out for the fractional delays in the dancelike numbers, for example, and see if they don't bring a smile to your face.

Andsnes (EMI/Warner, 4/02) makes for an interesting comparison here, in that the Norwegian has a somehow more solid, more central conception of this repertoire, but not necessarily a more riveting one. Take, for instance, the Waltz, Op 12 No 2, where Kozhukhin is the more unpredictably capricious. These are performances worthy of a place on the shelves beside the classic Gilels (DG). From the 'once upon a time' opening of the 'Arietta' to the subtly rhetorical 'Elegy', with its constant questioning intonations, to the almost frenzied jubilation of 'Wedding Day at Troldhaugen', this is an extraordinary journey, made all the more enjoyable by top-class recording quality and Nigel Simeone's delightful booklet essay. **G**

PHOTOGRAPH: VERONICA NEO, MARCO BORGGREVE

KEY TO SYMBOLS

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue



Orchestral



Edward Seckerson on Mahler's last symphony from Herbert Blomstedt:

'The second-movement *Ländler* favours good-natured ebullience over any suggestion that it might be a dance of death' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**



Pwyll ap Siôn hears a varied offering from violinist Mari Samuelsen:

'In Glass's "Knee Play 2", coruscating repeating patterns leap off the soundboard as if fingers were treading on hot coals' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**

JL Adams

Become Desert

Seattle Symphony Chorale and Orchestra /

Ludovic Morlot

Cantaloupe ⓘ (CD + DVD) CA21148 (40' • DDD)



Edgard Varèse, Peter Sculthorpe, Michael Finnissy, Steve Reich – several composers

have written music that has drawn inspiration from the desert's lunar-like landscape. Stark and inhospitable, its forbidding otherworldliness forces us as humans to reassess our relationship with the world around us.

Now there are far more reasons to do this. The world is getting warmer, and after the rising of the tides it may one day 'become desert'. No wonder these arid areas form the final part of John Luther Adams's large-scale orchestral triptych, after *Become River* and *Become Ocean*.

Become Desert has been described by Adams as 'both a celebration of the deserts we are given and a lamentation of the deserts we create', but its main qualities lie in the music's ability to allow listeners to navigate their own course through something that's so much larger. It ties in with the process of self-realisation that's key to the work. The enormous wave-like shapes of *Become Ocean* give way here to a gentler and more static sound world where shimmering harmonics vibrate above resonant low basses, their resonating hues dissolving into kaleidoscopic particles of liquid sound – a music pulsing with a sapping heat that consumes everything in its wake.

During the first half, soft strings, voices and chiming percussion almost imperceptibly coalesce into pulsing harmonic shapes and chords. It's as if we're witnessing the gradual coming-into-being – mirage-like – of a strange and ethereal tonality. At around the 20-minute mark, the music momentarily takes a darker turn with deep brass, basses and rumble of

drums penetrating floating sheets of sound that quiver in the fragile air. A tussle breaks out between low and high, with trumpets, voices and high strings asserting superiority. No sooner has the music changed than we become aware that we have come full circle. The last seven or so minutes signal a return to the opening. In this immutable landscape nothing seems to change, yet everything changes.

Other than a few glitchy edits, the sound balance on this recording is excellent. It also features a measured and assured performance from the Seattle Symphony and Seattle Symphony Chorale under Ludovic Morlot. The package includes an accompanying DVD containing an overlapping gallery of looped images – sweeping panoramic rock-like vistas, arid landscapes and sturdy, shrub-like vegetation appearing against sandy contours.

Become Desert manages to capture the elemental breath of nature in sound while providing a salutary reminder to us all as the earth's climate continues to change.

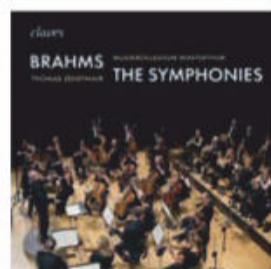
Pwyll ap Siôn

Brahms

Complete Symphonies

Musikkollegium Winterthur / Thomas Zehetmair

Claves ⓘ ② 50 1916/17 (156' • DDD)



Brahms visited Switzerland frequently. In August 1856 he met the music publisher Jakob Melchior Rieter-Biedermann on the first of 14 trips to the country. The composer often stayed with the publisher in Winterthur, a town 20km north-east of Zurich. Brahms was welcomed by the family and there was much music-making. Rieter-Biedermann's wife, Louise, and one of his daughters, Ida, even helped Brahms select biblical passages for his *German Requiem*, one of 22 works entrusted to the Winterthur publishing house.

Perhaps Brahms even heard the Musikkollegium Winterthur on one of his visits, as the orchestra can trace its history back to 1629. Under principal conductor Thomas Zehetmair, they now offer a fine cycle of the four symphonies, having played them in a six-day Brahms festival at the end of the 2018-19 season. Being a chamber orchestra, they reveal the sort of textures that Brahms himself might have recognised. Claves' booklet has no details on the number of strings deployed but the cover photo indicates just eight first violins – we know Brahms had 10 at Meiningen.

Chamber-orchestra Brahms symphonies are nothing new. Paavo Berglund and Charles Mackerras recorded refreshing cycles two decades ago which opened many ears to 'smaller-scale' Brahms. Mackerras's Telarc cycle was made with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, who last year released a new cycle under Robin Ticciati, which provided much of my comparative listening here. Reviewing that set, Andrew Farach-Colton wrote that the opening to Ticciati's Brahms First 'sounds an awful lot like Beethoven played on period instruments'. And it does, particularly through the use of small-bore trombones and Viennese horns, and limited use of vibrato. You wouldn't think that here, though. Although Zehetmair's performances are quite pacy, there's no sense of revelation. The major benefit of playing these symphonies with chamber-orchestra forces should be the clarity of textures, bringing woodwind articulation to the fore. But here, the strings don't sound as lithe as their Scottish counterparts and the acoustic is quite cloudy, meaning that not as much detail comes through as you'd expect, especially when compared with Ticciati's readings. But the sense of 'enlarged chamber music' does come across and these are enjoyable accounts.

The opening of the First Symphony is fast and purposeful but it never feels driven too hard, nor does it play up to period manners. Unlike Ticciati, Zehetmair observes the first-movement exposition



Ludovic Morlot directs the Seattle Symphony Orchestra in assured performances of music by John Luther Adams

repeat (as he does in the Second), and shapes lines beautifully, especially in the flowing *Andante sostenuto*. The third-movement *Un poco allegretto e grazioso* is a little breathless at times but Zehetmair encourages an unbuttoned, joyous finale.

The Second – the most Schubertian of the four symphonies – glows in sunny D major, unfurled here with the greatest of ease and charm, the best account in this set. Zehetmair allows his oboe plenty of room at the start of the *Adagio non troppo*, pointed with delicious little hesitations. The finale is propelled exuberantly towards its climax.

Zehetmair gives the Third a swift reading, bringing brusque impetuosity to the first movement, but there's balm to the warm clarinet tone in the *Andante*. He keeps the *Poco allegretto* on the move – I would have liked more of a wallow here, or at least some time to breathe – whereas Ticciati treats this movement oh so tenderly. Although the Swiss strings aren't weighty, Zehetmair draws the stormiest response in the finale before its curious, low-key sign-off.

The Fourth opens its blossoms gradually, a loving performance that highlights some wonderful woodwind exchanges. Zehetmair segues straight into the second movement,

which then feels like a natural extension of the first. The *Allegro giocoso* bustles along and the lack of stodge in the passacaglia finale is welcome.

Amiable performances, then, if hardly as revelatory as Ticciati's SCO accounts.

Mark Pullinger

*Selected comparison – coupled as above:
SCO, Ticciati (4/18) (LINN) CKD601*

Braunfels

Hebridentänze, Op 70^a. *Orchestral Suite*, Op 48.

Sinfonia concertante, Op 68^b

^b**Ernst Kovacic vn** ^b**Thomas Selditz va** ^a**Piers Lane pf** BBC Concert Orchestra / Johannes Wildner

Dutton Epoch F CDLX7355 (81' • DDD/DSD)



According to Michael Haas's invaluable *Forbidden Music* (Yale UP: 2013),

Walter Braunfels chose mental rather than physical emigration after the Nazis hounded him out of his job at the Cologne Music Academy – believing himself to be 'a stone in the dam that was keeping evil from flooding everything'. One of the first 'exile' works that he completed, in 1936 (though he seems to have started it at

least four years earlier), was the Orchestral Suite in E minor, recorded here for the first time.

Like the orchestral suites of Enescu and Dohnányi, it's not quite what you might call symphonic (at least not in the Brahmsian sense) but it's large in scale and unmistakably serious in purpose. Braunfels's movement titles evoke the Baroque era – there's a Präludium and a Sarabande – but the sound world is one in which late Romanticism has started to darken and grow chilly. The big, lowering central Marsch evokes Mahler one moment, Kurt Weill the next; and the second-movement Courante takes Bach's A minor Fantasia and transforms it into a *Totentanz*: a musical symbol of German culture's acceleration into the abyss.

Followers of the Braunfels revival will certainly want to hear this, and Wildner and his BBC forces go at it with a nervous, insistent energy that actually suits the music's essentially tragic character well – as does the bass-heavy recorded sound. The other two (post-war) works are not new to disc but Piers Lane is easily the most alert and engaging pianist on record in the *Hebridentänze* (a sort of post-Romantic Scottish Fantasy for piano and orchestra) and the slightly rough-cut solo playing in

GRAMOPHONE Focus

A BERLIOZ BONANZA

Mike Ashman hears the evergreen Symphonie fantastique and the rarely heard Lélio on a contrasting pair of new recordings



Expertly played: Philippe Jordan and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra offer richly detailed Berlioz

Berlioz

Symphonie fantastique, Op 14.

Lélio, ou Le retour à la vie, Op 14b^a

^aCyrille Dubois ten ^aFlorian Sempey bar

^aJean-Philippe Lafont narr ^aVienna Singverein; Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Philippe Jordan

Wiener Symphoniker M ②

WSO20 (90' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, November 10 & 11, 2018

Berlioz

Symphonie fantastique, Op 14. Lélio, ou Le retour à la vie, Op 14b - Fantaisie sur la Tempête de Shakespeare^a

^aToronto Mendelssohn Choir; Toronto Symphony Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos F CHSA5239 (70' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



At the time of writing, online research about these two works led one straight to ecstatic reviews of the May 2019 Philharmonie de Paris concert by François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles (still available to watch on the venue's website and hopefully slated for a DVD release). Their *Lélio* made at least a conservative attempt at staging the work according to Berlioz's instructions – although ignoring his wish that the only

person actually seen until the end should be the narrator, not the musicians. It makes a huge difference. Without this dynamic, *Lélio* – truly a semi-staged symphonic work in which the presence of an actor and drama is intentionally as radical as the entry of voices was in Beethoven Ninth – can, in truth, be rather dull on record (and there are now at least five competing versions). It is not helped by the temptation of most of the chosen narrators to sound like *The Art of Coarse Acting*'s guide to Shakespeare – speak as if addressing a ship in fog, and artificially stress every third syllable. Only on Riccardo Muti's CSO performance does Gérard Depardieu (the best narrator to date on disc) avoid this route.

Philippe Jordan plays *Lélio* complete. He ignores two specific Berlioz instructions, taking a singer (Jean-Philippe Lafont) rather than an actor for his narrator and using the same tenor for both the Goethe ballad and the 'Chant de bonheur'. But he gets the Vienna Singverein to manage both French and the Italian of the concluding *Tempest Fantasy* – which he builds to a cracking climax – quite well. Lafont, however, seems to prefer Shakespearean dreaminess to poisoned mental neurosis; we forget here that *Lélio* is Berlioz. As for *Lélio* on the Chandos recording, Sir Andrew Davis goes one step further than his namesake Sir Colin, omitting not just the entire narration but all the music apart from the final Fantasy. It makes for

a nice *bonne bouche* on disc, although the recording quality is a little strange, the choir living at first in a trebly haze that makes them sound somewhere else altogether.

Jordan's handling of the symphony is competitive in the *Fantastique*'s now overcrowded catalogue. It's expertly played and sounds well in the Goldener Saal of the city's Musikverein. Without offering either 'original' instruments or interpretations influenced by them, his reading reflects carefully rehearsed thought about the work's drama and instrumental colours. It's a slight pity that the performance reaches such a peak in its moodily dark 'Scène aux champs' (with the most forthright timpani and wind dialogues) as to make the final two movements feel anticlimactic. Earlier the conductor's quest for detail – including the lengths of pauses – makes his first movement something of a stop-go affair, while 'Un bal' is more notable for wind detail than the sway of the dance floor. But, as what an American colleague of mine would term an 'unobjectionably centrist' view of the piece, it has real merits.

The Davis Toronto reading is also one of clear intelligence. Like Jordan, Davis has the distinct advantage for this score of considerable experience in opera. He handles all the work's sections with due clarity and purpose as to their place in the autobiographical story. I only wish for a little more pizzazz in the playing – 'the miracle of fire and beauty' that a 1930s critic (was it Neville Cardus?) once described in Sir Thomas Beecham's performance of one of the Berlioz overtures – and perhaps in the recording too, which is clear but rather lacking in depth.

Neither of these two newcomers would join my shortlist of 'great' recordings of the symphony. These remain, perhaps disappointingly, the same as I found in my July 2007 Collection, with pride of place going to the much-neglected Minkowski disc – with its mix of old and 'new' orchestras – and plaudits aplenty for Gardiner, Norrington and Beecham. I hope we get that Roth/Les Siècles concert and, perhaps, a new Gardiner. If you want *Lélio* for its own sake, the Muti should satisfy, although the *Fantastique* is not so compelling. **G**

Lélio – selected comparisons:

LSO, C Davis (12/97) (PHIL) ▶ 478 9299

Chicago SO, Muti (11/15) (CSO) CSOR9011501

Symphonie fantastique – selected comparison:

Mahler CO, Musiciens du Louvre, Minkowski

(DG) ▶ 474 209-2GH

the *Sinfonia concertante* is hardly a serious concern in repertoire as rare – and as deserving – as this. **Richard Bratby**

Copland · Chávez

'Pan-American Reflections'
Chávez Symphony No 2, 'Sinfonía India'

Copland Symphony No 3

The Orchestra of the Americas /

Carlos Miguel Prieto

Linn F CKD604 (53' • DDD)

Recorded live at The Kryzstof Penderecki European Centre for Music, Lusławice, Poland, July 14-15, 2018



These performances were recorded live at the opening concerts of The Orchestra of the Americas' 2018 European tour. Overall, the quality of the playing is on quite a high level considering that this is, in essence, a training ground for musicians under 30 and that the orchestra's entire roster changes from one year to the next.

I was particularly impressed by the woodwinds, both corporately as well as in individual solos, and the sturdy string sound (setting aside some audible insecurity in exposed, high-lying passages for the violins). I only wish the trumpets played with greater confidence. But, broadly speaking, the interpretations themselves feel rather reticent. Indeed, I would never have guessed these were live recordings (the audience is nearly silent and applause has been edited out).

Carlos Miguel Prieto displays a fine grasp of the architecture of Copland's Third Symphony, deftly manoeuvring through the many subtle shifts of tempo, but often seems to err on the side of caution. So, for instance, while he hews close to the composer's metronome mark for the *Allegro molto* second movement, it nevertheless comes across as slightly stodgy and lacking in bite. Prieto is most persuasive in lyrical music. The central trio of that scherzo-like second movement – at once mellifluous and piquant – is a lovely example and showcases the strengths of the orchestra's woodwinds.

Much the same can be said for Chávez's colourful *Sinfonía India*. The fast outer sections require more rhythmic drive and flair than Prieto provides; but then listen to the disarming naturalness with which he phrases the folksy tune at 2'18", or how clearly he articulates the exquisitely layered textures at 2'58" – captured with stunning transparency by Linn's engineers. For a more thoroughly satisfying account, stick

with Eduardo Mata's LSO recording (Vox, 4/00). And, come to think of it, Mata's eloquently unaffected Copland Third still holds up well, too (EMI/Warner, 3/87). **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Debussy

Berceuse héroïque. Deux Danses.

Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire.

Nocturnes^a. Printemps. Rapsodie^b

^bClaude Delangle asax

^aPhilharmonic Chamber Choir of Europe; Singapore Symphony Orchestra / Lan Shui

BIS F BIS2232 (76' • DDD/DSD)



The Singapore Symphony's Debussy first impressed me with an excellent *La mer* under Lan Shui in an imaginatively programmed 2007 disc of orchestral seascapes which included works by Bridge and Glazunov. This is their third all-Debussy disc since and it features several not-quite-rarities, attractively performed.

Benefiting from BIS's excellent SACD engineering in the orchestra's Esplanade Concert Hall, the disc teems with the sort of detail that debunks the myth of Debussy as an 'Impressionist' composer, a sort of aural equivalent to Claude Monet. Yes, there's gauzy string-playing; but woodwind contributions emerge with clarity, as does the piano contribution in *Printemps*, a work composed during Debussy's third year at the Villa Medici following his 1884 Prix de Rome victory. Inspired by Botticelli's *Primavera*, the original score of *Printemps* was lost – so Debussy claimed – in a fire. Henri Büsser prepared the orchestral version known today under the composer's supervision in 1912.

There's plenty of surface glitter in this Singapore account, although it doesn't have the same level of sparkle as Emmanuel Krivine's Luxembourg Philharmonic recording on a disc that shares much of the same repertoire. Certainly the Luxembourgers swagger down the boulevards of the second movement with more Parisian insouciance.

I very much enjoyed the smoky atmosphere in the saxophone *Rapsodie*, smouldering swirls conjured up by soloist Claude Delangle, and the classical cool of the *Danse sacrée et danse profane*, languidly paced, Gulnara Mashurova rippling through the harp solos evocatively.

Nocturnes is the most familiar work here and it faces stiff competition on disc, not least from François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles on their excellent *Harmonia Mundi*

disc last year, where he hid his ladies choir – *Les Cris de Paris* – among his players, making them part of the orchestral texture. The Philharmonic Chamber Choir of Europe sing well but sound a little too 'present' to be seductive in '*Sirènes*'. Elsewhere, though, Shui and the Singaporeans play most persuasively, with a particularly lively '*Fêtes*'.

Two rarer works fill out the disc. The *Marche écossaise*, based on a Scottish bagpipe tune, is perkily dispatched, while Shui captures the nostalgic nature of the *Berceuse héroïque* very well indeed to close a most tempting triptych of Debussy discs.

Mark Pullinger

Nocturnes, Marche écossaise – selected comparison:

Siècles, Roth (12/18) (HARM) HMM90 5291

Nocturnes, Printemps, Danses – selected comparison:

Luxembourg PO, Krivine (TIMP) 1C1173

Elgar

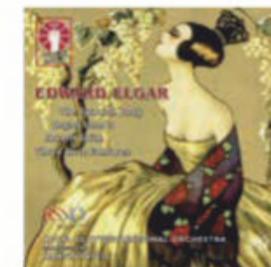
Civic Fanfare (three versions)^a. Organ Sonata, Op 28 (orch Jacob). Severn Suite, Op 87.

The Spanish Lady, Op 89 - Symphonic Suite (realised Yates)^a

^aChristopher Nickol org

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates

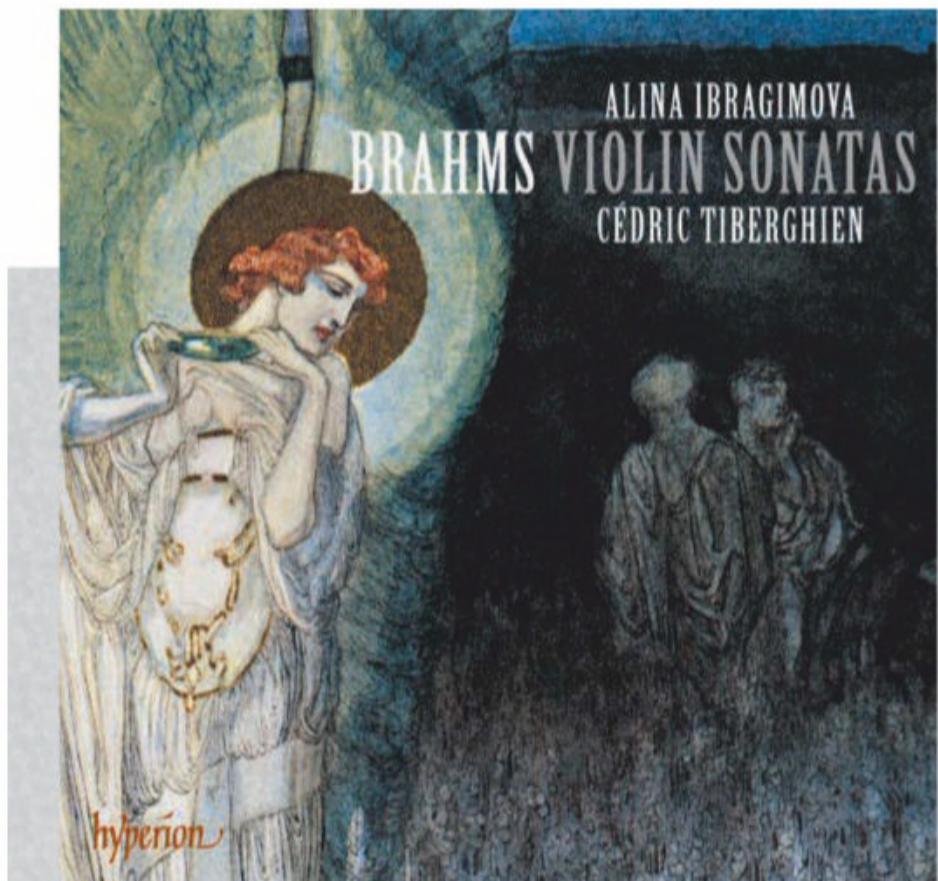
Dutton Epoch F CDLX7363 (78' • DDD/DSD)



It was in the late summer of 1932 that Elgar began jotting down ideas for *The Spanish Lady*, a 'Grand Opera on the biggest scale' (as vouchsafed to his close friend, Billy Reed), based on Ben Jonson's Jacobean comedy *The Devil is an Ass*. We've had various iterations of Elgar's copious sketches from Percy Young and John Longstaff (the latter scored 11 brief numbers for the Northern Ballet Theatre's 2000 production, *Great Expectations*), and now comes Martin Yates with his own elaboration. Most gratifying it is, too: some highly attractive thematic material (with its unmistakable and often touching allusions to, among other Elgar masterworks, *Cockaigne*, *The Wand of Youth*, *Nursery Suite*, *Enigma Variations* and *Pomp and Circumstance*) has been deftly assimilated into a four-movement symphonic suite lasting around 27 minutes that has already afforded me lots of pleasure. Under Yates's watchful lead, the RSNO sound like they are enjoying themselves enormously.

Yates also presides over a new version of Gordon Jacob's gorgeous orchestration of Elgar's Organ Sonata. Consigned to oblivion after Sir Adrian Boult's June 1947 broadcast world premiere with the BBC SO, and branded a failure by its rueful

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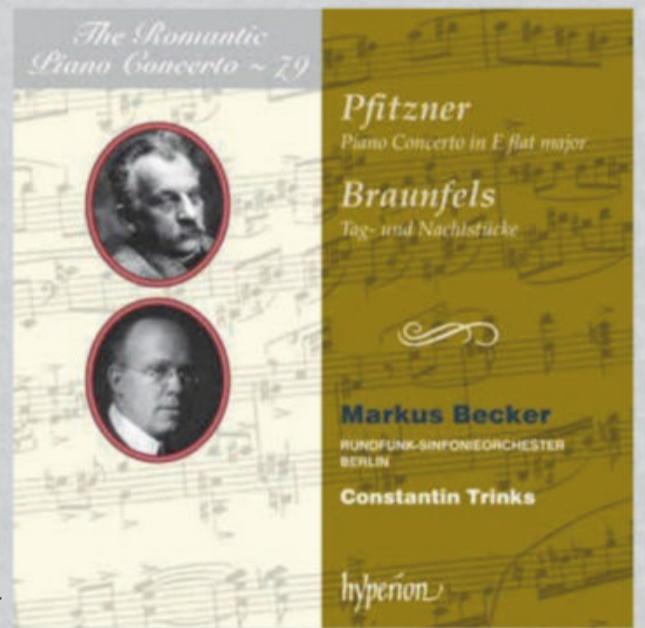
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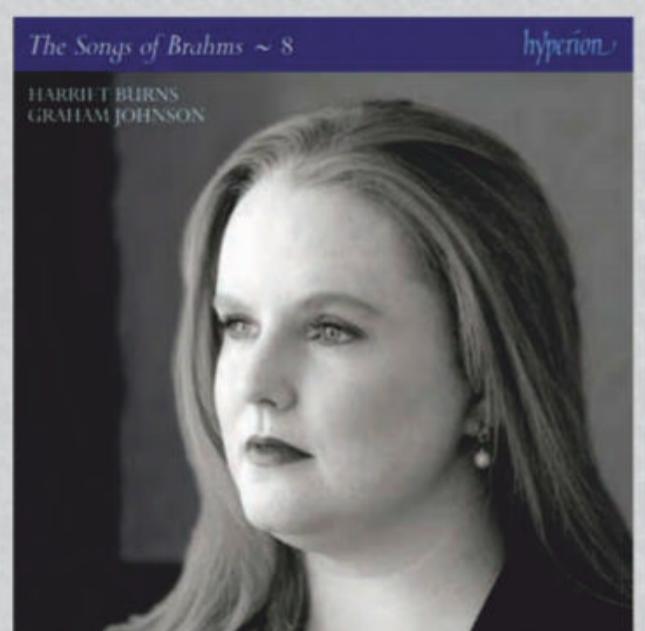
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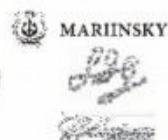
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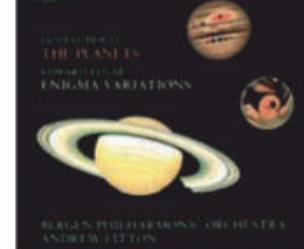
creator in an interview with annotator Lewis Foreman just a few years prior to Vernon Handley's exemplary pioneering 1988 recording with the RLPO, it emerges here with comparably flying colours, Yates's affectionately unhurried approach paying especial dividends in the middle movements: the enchanting *Allegretto* has something of the nostalgia and whimsy of the two infinitely touching suites that comprise *The Wand of Youth*, while the ensuing *Andante espressivo* brings unmistakable foreshadowings of those inspired slow movements of the Violin Concerto and both symphonies. No less than Handley's rather more thrusting account, this stylish newcomer had me admiring afresh the structural ambition, harmonic resourcefulness and tenderness of expression to be found in Elgar's Op 28 – 'Symphony No 0' indeed.

Commissioned for the 1930 National Brass Band Championship at Crystal Palace and orchestrated by the composer the following February, the *Severn Suite* sounds positively newly minted when given such opulent and beguilingly alert advocacy as Yates's. We also get three different versions (spanning some six years) of the brief *Civic Fanfare* that Elgar originally wrote for the mayoral procession that accompanied the opening of the 1927 Three Choirs Festival in Hereford. All told, a conspicuously rewarding and generously full anthology that no Elgarian will want to miss. Dutton's enticingly ripe sound and copious presentation are the icing on the cake. **Andrew Achenbach**

Elgar · Holst

Elgar Variations on an Original Theme, 'Enigma', Op 36 **Holst** *The Planets*, Op 32
Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton

BIS F BIS2068 (83' • DDD/DSD)



Edward Gardner and Vasily Petrenko have been taking their Norwegian orchestras through plenty of Elgar in concert while recording the same works with ensembles in Britain. There is a certain feeling for the composer on the Danish-Norwegian axis – explainable via cultural and geopolitical history, to a point – which this 2013 Bergen recording of the *Enigma* Variations under Gardner's predecessor Andrew Litton reveals in its depth, detail, sincerity and fluency.

Jazz-literate Litton invests the score with the improvisatory feeling that

induced it in the first place, even if he draws out the initial theme in a way that might concern some (like his over-egged last gesture in the finale). Other than that, the performance is on-point, elegiac, witty, high on self-confidence where it needs to be (with a swagger recalling Barbirolli) and convincingly compassionate elsewhere. Ensemble is tight and textures meticulous, for which try 'BGN' with its cello solo leading to the misty sea-voyage clarinet solo. The fresh, woody quality of the Bergen strings makes for a distinctive 'Nimrod' – even if Litton doesn't tug the movement onwards in the middle as others so effectively do – and delivers moments to savour throughout, as at 4'13" in the finale, when the music starts to dig deep. All over, phrasing conveys the narrative and Litton's generosity of spirit, more hot-headed than Petrenko in Liverpool, moved me deeply.

Only one serious concern with Holst's *The Planets* that follows, recorded four years later in 2017 (well into Gardner's tenure), and that's the way Litton has the main theme in 'Jupiter' fall exaggeratedly into its tempo – twice. The jollity is on the leaden side and the string constellation that opens the movement lacks the static electricity it needs. Otherwise, everything is in place in a meaty performance that doesn't quite reach the lightness and fluidity of Vladimir Jurowski's live performance with the LPO or the fearsome power of Gardner's with the National Youth Orchestra, but does well on focusing the score's unusual and ethereal textures. So a case of decent Holst but exceptional Elgar. **Andrew Mellor**

Elgar – selected comparison:

RLPO, V Petrenko (5/19) (ONYX) ONYX4205

Holst – selected comparisons:

LPO, Jurowski (11/10) (LPO) LPO0047

NYO, Gardner (3/17) (CHAN) CHSA5179

► See *The Musician and the Score* on page 64

Gershwin · Goodyear

Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue (original jazz band version)^a **Goodyear** Callaloo^a. Piano Sonata

Stewart Goodyear pf

Chineke! Orchestra / Wayne Marshall

Orchid F ORC100100 (60' • DDD)



The curtain rips apart with brash glissandos, followed by syncopated bitonality that cries out 'Busoni in Trinidad!', only to morph into propulsive Bartókian chords and wild percussion dancing the night away. The themes are closer to 'hooks'

than melodies, but that's perfectly fine, because you're listening with your body. And we're only into the first of the five movements comprising *Callaloo*, Stewart Goodyear's exciting, inventive and smartly scored suite for piano and orchestra.

The second movement gives the percussion section a respite, adding horns alongside the strings. The tempo is slower and the mood is calmer, while Goodyear's characteristically busy and energetic piano-writing gains breathing room. Goodyear likens the third-movement Ballad to the kind of lilting moderate-tempo mento that Harry Belafonte popularised (think of the singer's treatment of 'Jamaica Farewell').

The solo-piano fourth-movement cadenza begins lyrically yet traverses the whole keyboard; again Busoni's harmonic ambivalence informs Goodyear's aesthetic but with a sensual component distinctly his own. The cadenza ultimately builds into a frenzied yet strongly profiled fifth-movement finale with full forces present. Here Goodyear's penchant for counterpoint conveys more focus (the fleet trumpet and clarinet lines against the piano, for example). I find the extended percussion-only passage towards the end a tad audience-baiting and 'showbiz'-orientated but it admittedly works – and, besides, the public can't resist a drum solo! Under Wayne Marshall's sympathetic leadership, the Chineke! Orchestra sound as if they're having the time of their lives.

Goodyear's three-movement Piano Sonata stems from his 18th year, and he confesses that he wanted to show off and write the most difficult piano work ever. While the outer movements' pop influence results in stretches of predictable syncopations, I hear sheer creativity and joy rather than youthful hubris in Goodyear's wonderfully idiomatic piano-writing. The slow movement works best when Goodyear sings out simply, yet works less well in his fatiguing deployment of high-register block chords. Still, we hear a real composer in the making, not to mention an 'unreal' pianist; those effortless double notes and ricochetting chordal jumps alone will make mortal key-pushers green with envy. And with so many pianists these days mistaking *Rhapsody in Blue* for Rachmaninov's Third, Goodyear's bracingly forthright and ever-fresh interpretation is a welcome corrective.

If you only know this musician from his Beethoven sonata cycle and complete *Nutcracker* ballet transcription recordings, be prepared for another extraordinary example of Stewart Goodyear's wide-ranging gifts. **Jed Distler**

Holbrooke

'Symphonic Poems, Vol 3'
 Symphony No 3, 'Ships', Op 90. The Birds of Rhiannon, Op 87. The Girl I Left Behind Me - Symphonic Variations, Op 37 No 2
Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern / Howard Griffiths
CPO F CPO555 041-2 (70' • DDD)



Apparently 'the cockney Wagner' Josef Holbrooke was neither a cockney (born in Croydon, settled in Haringey) nor a Wagnerian (more on that later). He can hardly be blamed for adopting a German spelling of his forename in order to sound more like the real deal. Holbrooke failed to complete his degree at the Royal Academy of Music in 1896 owing to family problems and, unlike some other modestly talented composers of the period, had no guarantees or privileges to fall back on. He was a music-hall act and a destitute teacher before his career took off.

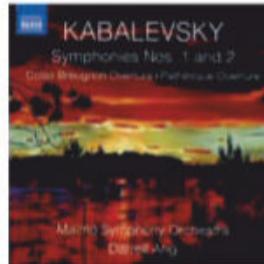
Gareth Vaughan's booklet note refers to Holbrooke's 'handling of the orchestra being more redolent of Debussy or Ravel' than Wagner, which seems about right. The mysterious ending to *The Birds of Rhiannon*, the many instances of entwined woodwinds glancing towards Arcadia (as in the central movement of the Symphony No 3, which also includes a delicious sax solo) and the ripe opportunity to twist the orchestral kaleidoscope presented by the *Symphonic Variations* all show that Holbrooke was no mean painter of orchestral colour.

What's left – on the evidence of those three works taken as wholes – is music that's just a bit thin, anonymous, washy and maybe even caught between worlds (one reason variation form suited him; Henry Wood loved his *Variations on 'Three Blind Mice'*). The symphony, *Ships*, moves from a jingoistic reflection of the British fleet setting forth to destroy to a highly reflective portrait of hospital ships with their sorrowful human cargo (that central movement already mentioned) and a final celebration of merchant ships, which introduces the shanty 'The Maid of Amsterdam'. Was Holbrooke's experience of poverty and hardship the reason he felt compelled to ballast his penchant for the mysterious, the luminous and the reflective orchestration with stuff he thought might sell?

Andrew Mellor

Kabalevsky

Symphonies - No 1, Op 18; No 2, Op 19.
Colas Breugnon, Op 24 - Overture.
Pathétique Overture, Op 64
Malmö Symphony Orchestra / Darrell Ang
Naxos F 8 573859 (52' • DDD)



Overshadowed by Shostakovich, Prokofiev and other luminaries of 20th-century Russian music, Dmitry Kabalevsky nevertheless composed at least one work in which unalloyed pizzazz ensured him a fairly stable place in the repertoire. The *Colas Breugnon* overture is a rip-roaring curtain-raiser to his opera premiered in 1938, revised 30 years later and radiating the eternal optimism of its eponymous hero, the Burgundian craftsman of Rolland Romain's historical romance.

Kabalevsky was a politically astute composer: eternal optimism would certainly not have been frowned upon by the proponents of the 'bright and beautiful' qualities of socialist realism and Soviet life, but in more serious-minded music he also managed to carve for himself an honourable artistic path through the thickets of Party doctrine. The two movements of the First Symphony in C sharp minor (1932), dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the 1917 Revolution, trace a trajectory from overcast pre-Revolutionary oppression towards the bright dawn of the Soviet future, but they do so with musical cohesion, strong ideas (some of them folk-inflected) and a firm grasp of both orchestration and dramatic structure. Kabalevsky's creative voice, formed under the influence of Myaskovsky, is nonetheless thoroughly individual.

The Second Symphony in C minor (1934), which was championed by, among others, Toscanini and Malcolm Sargent, has two upbeat outer movements, at times presaging *Colas Breugnon*'s rhythmic sleight of hand, and between them an *Andante non troppo*. This central panel throws up divergent interpretative points of view. In the pairing of the same two symphonies by the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Loris Tjeknavorian sees this *Andante* as a grief-laden, angst-ridden threnody, adding three minutes to the timing adopted by the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and Darrell Ang, where the atmosphere is more reflective, more lyrical though no less emotionally forceful. This is an observation rather than a criticism; but in terms of orchestral polish and recording quality the

Malmö pairing is superior. More than that, Ang and the orchestra touch the music's nerve and animate it compellingly.

Geoffrey Norris

Symphonies – selected comparison:
Armenian PO, Tjeknavorian (ASV) CDDCA1032

Mahler

Symphony No 4

Sofia Formina sop London Philharmonic Orchestra / Vladimir Jurowski

LPO M LPO0113 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, October 12, 2016



A Mahler Fourth as insightful and as individual as we have come to expect from this source. How rarely we hear the opening bars of the symphony delivered precisely as Mahler instructs: *Bedächtig*, *Nicht eilen* ('Deliberate. Don't hurry'), the sleigh bells gently out of kilter at the *ritardando*, a Viennese decorum holding court in Mahler's rarefied nature world.

And yet the eternal child within him is always present, primed to rebel (cue the E flat clarinet) in those quickenings of pulse, those raucous scamperings. Texturally, harmonically and in terms of characterisation (never over-egged), Jurowski achieves a wondrous clarity and transparency. There are eye-popping pizzicatos and *subito* switches in dynamics designed to catch us off-guard.

The sour note introduced by Death, the Fiddler in the second movement is unapologetically grating and in all the woodwind interjections – not least the spiky clarinet – it's a case of who can shout loudest. Contrasting with all this is that glorious glissando-swathed transformation at the end of the Trio. Indeed, Jurowski's way with all Mahler's portamento has an unaffected spontaneity about it. All credit to the London Philharmonic strings. These things can sound so 'dutiful'.

As in Adám Fischer's Düsseldorf account, I love the through-phrased fluency and intimacy of the slow movement (never more redolent of the introduction to the Quartet 'Mir its so wunderbar' from Beethoven's *Fidelio*), which eschews the kind of overwrought, over-extended rubatos that sometimes afflict it. It's the way in which Jurowski's phrasing always relates to sonority, the LPO strings intense and 'present' from top to bottom – those great sighing, plunging glissandos in the basses especially telling. Even the great 'Heaven's Gate' moment is delivered as



Intense rather than unhinged: Herbert Blomstedt brings tenderness and intimacy to Mahler's Ninth Symphony

a sudden fleeting (and glorious) vision, without pomposity or unearned grandiosity. Everything in proportion, in context.

Heavenly life finds approval in the bright and vibrant sound of soprano Sofia Fomina, whose rapid vibrato and lively awareness of the text's high-jinks all ring true. I personally crave more 'spin' and floatation in the repeated refrain – but her character certainly chimes with Jurowski's very 'immediate' view of the piece, where the close-ups are plentiful and revealing.

Edward Seckerson

Mahler

Symphony No 9

Bamberg Symphony Orchestra /

Herbert Blomstedt

Accentus (F) ② ACC30477 (83' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Joseph-Keilberth-Saal,
Bamberg, June 2018



School of Barbirolli. That was my first thought as the faltering pulse of the opening bars ushered in the warm and consoling first theme, first heard in the second, not first, violins. No hint so far

that a dark night of the soul might be imminent. There is fire in the belly of the beast as the first great climax washes over us and Blomstedt is sure to emphasise the cynical sneer of Mahler's stopped horns. But the impending nightmare is as yet at arms length.

So this is a reading of Mahler's last completed symphony (though, of course, it is actually his Tenth since *Das Lied von der Erde* was deliberately, superstitiously, given no ordinal number) which for all its defiance and resilience takes a mellower view of its long day's journey into night. It is less febrile, less neurotic than those readings from Bernstein or Tennstedt or even Abbado. The incremental building of the first movement is intense rather than unhinged, though each successive 'collapse' certainly delivers, with the roar of trombones at the biggest of them (the climax of the development) quite tremendous. But Blomstedt is more about the shadowy recesses of this first movement and the tenderness he ultimately coaxes from the resourceful Bamberg Symphony Orchestra.

The inner movements suggest that the hero of the piece (that is, Mahler himself) may go rather more quietly into the dark night. The second-movement Ländler favours good-natured ebullience over any

suggestion that it might indeed be a dance of death. It's a gentler, less punchy country dance. Charm rather than menace exudes. Even the contrabassoon at the close sounds cuddly. And then comes the Rondo-Burleske, which has rigour but no real teeth. Again, even the uncouth 'off-key' E flat clarinet has no malice and barely a hint of derision when he mocks the Trio's attempt to dig deeper. Those pages – with their poetic premonition of the finale – are indeed heartfelt, the dying glissando in flute and oboe not ugly but entirely serene.

The Bamberg strings are a warm embrace in the finale and the generous saturation of sound towards the far-reaching horizon reminds us just how extraordinary this movement is. But ultimately Blomstedt offers a more intimate, less 'cosmic' letting-go; and his refusal to hint at the infinite by taking all the remaining time in the world over those last pages, as Abbado and certainly Bernstein do (Abbado prefers to invoke his eternal silence after the music stops) means that one comes away from this performance with less of a sense of finality. It wasn't Mahler's last word, of course, but it was still a hard-fought-for peace, and Mahler without the neurosis just isn't the full story.

Edward Seckerson

J Marx

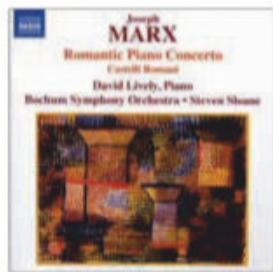
Romantisches Klavierkonzert. Castelli romani

David Lively *pf*

Bochum Symphony Orchestra / Steven Sloane

Naxos ® 8 573834 (73' • DDD)

From ASV CDDCA1174 (12/05)



Joseph Marx is little more than a footnote today, though Naxos is trying to put that right, bringing back to the catalogue recordings that originally appeared on ASV. It's striking that *Castelli romani*, a second piano concerto in all but name, remains the only version in the catalogue even 15 years on, despite the fact that it was highly praised by Walter Gieseking, who premiered the piece in 1931 under the baton of Karl Böhm. Perhaps the fact that it was stylistically at odds with its time hasn't helped but it has the generosity of colour that you find in Respighi's Roman trilogy, without necessarily his ear for melody.

In the first movement, subtitled 'Villa Hadriana', the performers are alive to both its cinematic sweep and its more playful elements, Marx's ear for orchestration gleefully brought to life, even down to the occasional moment of dodgy orientalism. We enter a different world in the slow movement, 'Tusculum', the soloist and the Bochum players fining things down to a mere thread of sound in its many ethereal moments. The finale, 'Frascati', shimmers and dances with vigour; it's possible to imagine more ease in some of the most overtly virtuoso passages but generally Lively lives up to his name, leading a merry dance through the town's ancient streets, and with all concerned relishing the work's resplendent closing moments.

From Technicolor to pure Romantic ardour for the Piano Concerto itself; it was written in 1918-19 and is stylistically an intriguing mix of Rachmaninov, Richard Strauss, early Debussy (his *Fantaisie* for piano and orchestra) and even the odd moment of Bergian harmony (his Piano Sonata). There's lots of affection and fluidity to Lively's performance, and some fine solo violin-playing (from 9'09" in the opening movement). There's no doubting Marx's ear for orchestration was a very fine one. While Lively lingers over this movement's Romantic lushness, Marc-André Hamelin favours a more energetic approach, making light of its demands.

The second movement is an unhurried affair, with some tangy oboe-playing in the introduction, Sloane coaxing long lines

from his Bochum players. Though Lively enters with an appealing gentleness I feel that Hamelin sustains the line better, the ebb and flow sounding more inevitable in his hands, though Lively does offer some fine whispered playing. Bolet, incidentally, is particularly charismatic in this movement in a currently unavailable recording made in 1982 with Mehta.

The finale perhaps drags its heels a little – it is marked *Sehr lebhaft* ('Very lively'). Both soloist and orchestra respond to its many imaginative colours and moods, though the more virtuoso moments occasionally sound strenuous. Turn to Hamelin and the BBC Scottish SO and you enter an altogether more fearless and thrilling sound world. **Harriet Smith**

Piano Concerto – selected comparison:

Hamelin, BBC Scottish SO, Vänskä

(4/98) (HYPE) CDA66990

Mozart · Phibbs**Mozart** Clarinet Concerto, K622^a**Phibbs** Clarinet Concerto^b**Mark van de Wiel** *cl***London Chamber Orchestra; ^bPhilharmonia****Orchestra / Christopher Warren-Green**

Signum ® SIGCD587 (55' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at Cadogan Hall, London,
February 23, 2013



Mark van de Wiel is principal clarinettist of the Philharmonia but here he steps out of his usual seat to become soloist in a new work composed for him. The Clarinet Concerto by Joseph Phibbs (b1974) is an attractive, well-argued work, demonstrating not only Phibbs's knowledge of clarinet technique and masterly control of orchestral forces but also the versatility and virtuosity of its dedicatee. The language is modern tonal, the rhythmic profile strong and clear. There's a feeling of nocturnal tension as the expectant opening gives way to more athletic figures – rather like an updated *West Side Story*, perhaps, although I fancy more contemporary American music was influential in some of the post-minimalist styles of the work's central panel. The repertoire is hardly bursting at the seams with 21st-century clarinet (or, frankly, any woodwind) concertos, so this is a valuable addition.

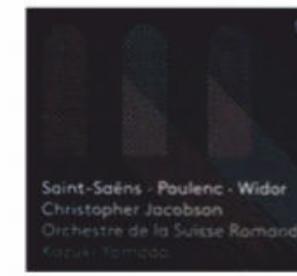
The performance, too, is top-notch. The Philharmonia play this new work as if it were an old friend, and the sound as caught in Henry Wood Hall has an inviting glow, illuminating the work's meditative opening and the vocalise of the third-movement

Adagio as well as the sparkling acrobatics of the finale.

Mozart's Concerto here comes from a live performance at Cadogan Hall. Van de Wiel swaps his standard instrument for a bassoon clarinet – for which the work was originally conceived – with its extended range that allowed Mozart to explore the lower chalumeau register that so preoccupied him in his late music. The London Chamber Orchestra can't quite match the lustre of the Philharmonia and some coordination between solo and *tutti* teeters at the edge. Van de Wiel's playing, though, always displays his customary assurance of technique and tone, even if certain noises associated with the physicality of woodwind-playing are betrayed by the microphones. The Mozart (with concluding applause) is never less than pleasant; the Phibbs, however, is essential. **David Threasher**

Poulenc · Saint-Saëns · Widor**Poulenc** Organ Concerto^a**Saint-Saëns** Symphony No 3, 'Organ', Op 78^a**Widor** Symphony No 5, Op 42 No 1 – Toccata**Christopher Jacobson** *org***Suisse Romande Orchestra / Kazuki Yamada**

Pentatone ® PTC5186 638 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Saint-Saëns's *Organ* Symphony has long been a showcase both for engineering prowess and for the capabilities of one's hi-fi kit. Charles Munch's white-hot 1959 recording, for example, was emblazoned with 'A Stereo Spectacular' on the LP cover – and the sound really did live up to the hype (RCA, 11/60). This new Pentatone release takes us yet another step closer to audiophile nirvana, providing a natural concert-hall perspective that balances clarity and atmosphere while capturing the full power of organ and orchestra with stunning, floor-rumbling power. Yet it's the score's quieter passages that impressed me most. Listen at 6'44" in the *Adagio*, where Saint-Saëns combines the organ part with both bowed and pizzicato strings – like sunlight filtered through stained glass – or, at 0'34" in the finale, to the breathtakingly exquisite texture of divided strings with arpeggiated piano (four-hands).

The performance itself is very good, although not in the same class as Munch's. Still, Kazuki Yamada's tempos are close to the composer's metronome marks and he keeps things moving without pushing too

A large, abstract, multi-colored sculpture composed of numerous thin, sharp, metallic-looking spikes or shards of light. The colors transition through various shades of purple, blue, red, orange, and yellow. It has a complex, organic, and somewhat chaotic structure, resembling a stylized flower or a microscopic view of a material.

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hard. I like the smiling solemnity he brings to the *Adagio* and the easy swing of the scherzo-like third movement. The Suisse Romande Orchestra don't play as tautly as the Utah Symphony do for Thierry Fischer (Hyperion, 1/19) – the rustling semiquavers in the opening *Allegro moderato* are a bit messy – but, in general, Yamada provides sufficient excitement, delicacy, grandeur and radiance where they're required.

Christopher Jacobson is very much an ensemble player and the reedy, Cavaillé-Coll-like splendour of the organ in Geneva's Victoria Hall is just right for this music. It suits Poulenc's G minor Concerto, too; and even if Jacobson's performance lacks the visionary intensity of Maurice Duruflé's (EMI/Warner, 6/62), recorded under the composer's supervision, it's potent nonetheless. The way he revels in the massive sonorities of the *Allegro giocoso* (listen starting at 1'11") gives me gooseflesh, for instance, and I love the sweet melancholy he and Yamada find in the *Très calme* section (at 3'01" on track 8). As an encore, Jacobson takes us on a leisurely, celestial stroll through Widor's well-worn Toccata that's very much like the composer's own 1932 recording – though, of course, in demonstration sound.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Prokofiev • Tchaikovsky



Prokofiev Piano Concerto No 2, Op 16

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23

Haochen Zhang pf

Lahti Symphony Orchestra / Dima Slobodeniouk

BIS (F) BIS2381 (66' • DDD/DSD)



This is not an obvious concerto coupling; but in fact there are at least

three others, two of them quite recent: Rana and Pappano (Warner Classics, 12/15), Gerstein and Gaffigan (Myrios, 2/15); from the past, there is Joselson and Ormandy (Sony). Even so, do we really need another Tchaikovsky First Concerto on disc with no fewer than 447 available on different current CDs? Well, the answer in this instance is an enthusiastic 'yes'.

Haochen Zhang won the gold medal at the Van Cliburn a decade ago. He has yet to make it as a headliner internationally but listening to his way with this old warhorse left me in no doubt that here is an artist of rare talent. Listen to the way he handles the opening pages – those chords above the stave on the third beat with their top F naturals, E flats and A flats ring out emphatically, those that follow are

extravagantly arpeggiated, and his phrasing of the solo and cadenza before the return of the opening theme is not just (the usual) empty bravura but thoughtfully shaped as though part of a conversation. In short, Zhang tells the introduction in such a way that you cannot wait to hear the rest of the story. Even if you instinctively shy away from yet another Tchaikovsky First, I think this performance will come as a refreshing surprise. The fast passagework in the central movement and the finale is thrillingly light and swift, and it is only a slight lack of weight in the final pages that, for me, falls short.

The Prokofiev, which precedes it, will do nothing to lessen the growing popularity of this extraordinary work. Again, it is Zhang's articulation and phrasing, precision and power that merit the highest praise. The Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Dima Slobodeniouk provide spirited support and offer formidable competition even to the incredible Yuja Wang/Gustavo Dudamel live performance in Caracas (DG, 2/14) – just listen to the way Zhang and Slobodeniouk present the peroration of the first movement. Spine-tingling. And all credit to BIS producer Marion Schwebel and engineer Christian Starke for the vivid sound picture. Like many of BIS's recent releases, the disc's sleeve is made of material from sustainable forest management, soy ink, eco-friendly glue and water-based varnish, and is easy to recycle: no plastic is used. Other labels take note. Another tick. In fact, full marks all round. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Richter • Pärt • Vasks

'Recomposed by Max Richter'

Pärt Fratres Vasks Vientulais enēģelis (Lonely Angel) Richter The Four Seasons Recomposed

Fenella Humphreys vn

Covent Garden Sinfonia / Ben Palmer

Rubicon (F) RCD1015 (64' • DDD)



Max Richter's recomposition of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* may not have

been met with unanimous critical approval when its premiere recording, featuring Daniel Hope, was released in 2012, yet it is proving to be an increasingly popular choice among some of today's top violinists, with Mari Samuelsen, Dalia Simaška and now Fenella Humphreys embracing the work's postmodern twist on the past.

Given Richter's established reputation as a film composer, it's perhaps a tad ironic that what attracted him to *The Four Seasons*

in the first place was a desire to reclaim Vivaldi's famous concerto set from its fetishised existence as a media-constructed commodity, used by adverts, jingles and television programmes. Richter's act of musical reconstruction does draw from the film composer's toolkit, however, with solo violin, string orchestra and harpsichord replicating techniques and processes more obviously associated with electronic pop music, such as time-stretching, sampling, looping and filtering. Its 12 movements take short earworm-like motifs from Vivaldi's original, spinning them out using minimalist-style patterning and layering or through ambient washes of sound.

While Richter's crescendo-like curves, cyclic chord patterns and abrupt endings replace Vivaldi's terraced dynamics, harmonic motion and balanced phrases, this recording actually comes closer to the spirit of Baroque music than Hope's on DG. Humphreys's solo violin blends well with the Covent Garden Sinfonia under Ben Palmer, who retain a subtle lightness of touch throughout. Their approach in general resembles that of a Baroque concerto – with its contrasts between solo concertino and *tutti* ripieno – and it would actually be interesting see how a period-instrument performance of Richter's piece might sound. Humphreys's delicate touch and expressive playing is especially evident during the middle movements of *Spring* and *Summer*, which is also carried across in her rendition of Peteris Vasks's *Lonely Angel*, although Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* does not possess quite the same power, thrust and presence of Viktoria Mullova's recent recording (Onyx, A/18). **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Schurmann

'The Film Music of Gerard Schurmann'

Attack on the Iron Coast - Main Title. The Long Arm - Tailing the Suspect. Suites - The Ceremony; Claretta; Dr Syn, alias The Scarecrow; The Gambler; Horrors of the Black Museum; Konga

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Rumon Gamba

Chandos (F) CHAN10979 (78' • DDD)



Three cheers to Chandos and their house team of conductor Rumon Gamba and the BBC Philharmonic for flying the flag for this venerable figure who, at 95, has put together the suites for the eight titles on this CD covering subject matter way beyond the assignment of horror movies with which Gerard Schurmann has been long associated.



Vivaldi recomposed: Fenella Humphreys combines Max Richter's take on The Four Seasons with works by Pärt and Vasks

It was the composer Alan Rawsthorne who acted as Gerard Schurmann's entrée into film music, a tale deftly told in the instructive booklet by Carolyn Nott. Schurmann was Rawsthorne's assistant, orchestrating and sometimes composing scenes, notably in *The Cruel Sea* (1953). Aside from Rawsthorne's work, his credits include *The Vikings* (Nascimbine), *Exodus* (Gold) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (Jarre), all worldwide box office hits, a feat that Schurmann as film composer, or rather the films themselves, never quite achieved. In this selection, *The Long Arm* alone enjoyed a London premiere at the Gaumont Haymarket in July 1956. Starring Jack Hawkins, then a top UK draw at the box office, it was a natural for the bright lights of the West End. Other Schurmann titles fared less well: *Konga* (1961), a cheap rip-off of *King Kong*, was branded as an 'inept, silly and ludicrously enjoyable monster movie' in a backhanded compliment by *Time Out*.

Dr Syn, alias The Scarecrow gets the CD off to a brilliant start. Set on the coast of south-east England, this schoolboy yarn brings to the fore Schurmann's keen dramatic sense in a tale of derring-do, featuring chases and a motley list of characters of whom Dr Syn, the local vicar and saviour of the downtrodden, has a noble theme befitting his office, which

is reprised in different hues. The demise of the monster in *Konga* follows Max Steiner's sympathetic portrayal in the earlier *King Kong* movie from 1933. The quirky 'Little Ape at Play', a brief humorous sketch, catches its playful behaviour. Schurmann composed a surprisingly engaging portrait of Claretta, Mussolini's mistress, in the film of the same name from 1984. Her own theme, a gentle string tune flecked with harp colours, is a sweet thing. The following romantic interlude, set in the Palazzo Venezia, is exquisitely scored and played. The world of *la dolce vita* that Claretta and Mussolini breathed is suggested in the waltz theme and heard again in the finale, where the composer unleashes 'a ravishing flood of romanticism', to quote David Wishart, the late authority on Schurmann.

The Ceremony (1963), set in Morocco, begins with a figure redolent of Falla before continuing along a shimmering, Impressionistic path with an array of wind instruments including Indian flute. The drama is given its head in a terrific action sequence, a speciality of the composer.

A late entry, *The Gambler* (1997) is based on a story by Dostoevsky and is again Impressionistic in part. A gambling wheel is illustrated by subtle changes in the time signature, and in 'Carriage Ride and Sunrise' there's a suggestion of the

gamelan, the instrument associated with Java, the birthplace of the composer.

Schurmann's trademark angular style, not so remote from Hindemith, finds its place in the punchy Main Title from *Attack on the Iron Coast* (1967) as well as the ferocious cue for 'Gruesome Murders' in *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1959).

This is a hugely enjoyable presentation in all respects, one that redresses the imbalance of a composer known for too long as the orchestrator of other people's music. In these sharply etched performances he can be appreciated in his own right as a key figure in the lexicon of film composers already represented in this fine series. **Adrian Edwards**

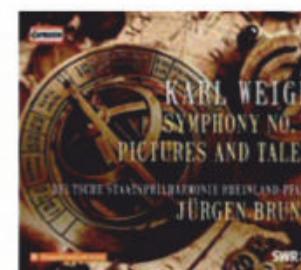
Weigl

Symphony No 1, Op 5.

Bilder und Geschichten, Op 2

Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz / Jürgen Bruns

Capriccio F C5365 (61' • DDD)



Born in 1881, Karl Weigl received lessons from Zemlinsky as a teenager, studied alongside Webern at the University of Vienna, was repetiteur

and assistant to Mahler at the Vienna Court Opera and taught composition to pupils including Korngold, Eisler and Zeischl. Following the *Anschluss* of Austria with Germany in 1938, he fled with his family to the United States, where he continued to compose and held a number of teaching positions until his death in 1949.

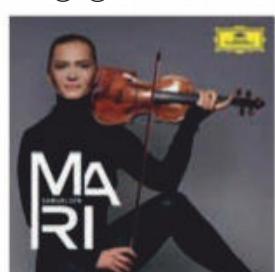
Considering Weigl's personal associations, including a close friendship with Schoenberg, not to mention the remarkable developments taking place in the Viennese musical scene of the time, the First Symphony is a surprisingly conservative affair for a work composed in 1908. Indeed, the music's almost total avoidance of chromaticism and general lack of harmonic sophistication is more suggestive of a piece written several decades earlier. The writing is for the most part tuneful and well constructed rather than distinctive or inspiring, although a degree of Dvořákian radiance and charm makes for a pleasant listen in the third-placed slow movement.

Composed for piano in 1909 and orchestrated in 1922, *Pictures and Tales* is a six-part suite of miniatures depicting scenes from fairy tales. As in the symphony, the work's musical idiom harks back to earlier times, the second and sixth pieces especially suggestive of the influence of Mendelssohn. The fourth movement, an easel lullaby, is particularly charming. Taken as a whole, however, this is not music that I found particularly memorable, despite the lively and engaging performances from conductor Jürgen Bruns. **Christian Hoskins**

Mari Samuelsen

JS Bach Invention No 13, BWV784. Prelude, BWV850. Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 - Chaconne. Solo Violin Sonata No 1, BWV1001 - Presto **Badzura** 847 CS Clark Mammal Step Sequence **Eno/Hopkins/Abrahams** Emerald and Stone **Eno/Roedelius/Moebius** By this River **Glass** Einstein on the Beach - Knee Play 2. Violin Concerto - 2nd movt **P Gregson** Lullaby. Sequence (Four) **Jóhannsson** Good Night, Day. Heptapod B **Martynov** The Beatitudes. Come in! - 2nd movt **Richter** Dona nobis pacem 2. Fragment. November. Vocal **Vasks** Vientulais en gelis (Lonely Angel)

Mari Samuelsen vn Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra / Jonathan Stockhammer DG M ② 483 5869GH2 (106' • DDD)



Don't be deceived by the slick packaging, stylised poses, smug self-titling, bland

booklet notes and banal, FM-friendly musical contents of Mari Samuelsen's latest release. Delve beneath the surface and there's some seriously impressive playing going on here.

This two-disc set sees the Norwegian violinist straying beyond the relative comfort zone of 'Nordic Noir' (11/17) in order to explore a more varied musical landscape. For evidence, look no further than Samuelsen's supercharged, energy-sapping rendition of 'Knee Play 2' from Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* – coruscating repeating patterns leaping off the soundboard as if fingers were treading on hot coals – or the nervous, agitated ostinato figurations found in Christian Badzura's 847. Samuelsen's Bach isn't bad either, as heard in her performance of the Chaconne from the composer's D minor Partita, BWV1004, full of sweeping parabola-like shapes and nuanced shadings; or the almost lilting motion she imparts to the Presto movement from the Sonata in G minor, BWV1001.

Some listeners will no doubt regard these Bach moments as high points on an album whose music occasionally flatters to deceive in terms of its emollient efficaciousness. Still, if the set's chocolate-box contents may appear too saccharine to many, one would be hard-pressed not to admire the hand-crafted precision and meticulousness of these musical confections. Standout moments include Pēteris Vasks's haunting *Lonely Angel*, high-altitude solo lines against a backdrop of gently rising and falling string accompaniment and affect-laden glissandos; Jóhann Jóhannsson's tender *Good Night, Day*, a salutary reminder of a career cut short in full bloom; or the sombre, valedictory mood of Peter Gregson's quiescent *Lullaby* for solo violin. Adequately supported by the Konzerthausorchester Berlin under Jonathan Stockhammer, there's more to the glossy surface than meets the eye.

Pwyll ap Siôn

'American Recorder Concertos'

Hickey A Pacifying Weapon^a **Newman** Concerto for Recorder, Harpsichord and Strings^b **R Sierra** Prelude, Habanera and Perpetual Motion^c

Stucky Etudes^d

Michala Petri rec^b **Anthony Newman** hpd^b **Nordic Quartet**; ^d**Danish National Symphony Orchestra / Lan Shui**; ^a**Royal Danish Academy of Music Concert Band / Jean Thorel**; ^c**Tivoli Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra / Alexander Shelley**

OUR Recordings ⑧ 226912 (73' • DDD)

^cRecorded live, July 1, 2018



Danish recorder doyenne Michala Petri turns to America for the latest instalment in her international concerto series, and it's a stylistically varied quartet of recent works. First up is Roberto Sierra's *Prelude, Habanera and Perpetual Motion*, a 2018 expansion and development of a 2006 composition for recorder and guitar, for which Petri is ably joined by the Tivoli Copenhagen Philharmonic under Alexander Shelley. The recorder occupies centre stage from the off; and with its ornate melismas circling over a pizzicato-strong accompaniment of ghostly harmonies, it's the perfect vehicle for Petri's clean, smooth, precise sound. Likewise the final bongo-accompanied 'Perpetual Motion', whose shrilly ducking and diving virtuosities are a reminder if any were needed of Petri's capacity to get her fingers around absolutely anything, no matter how fast, and make it sound like liquid mercury.

The Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Lan Shui join her for Steven Stucky's *Etudes* for recorder and orchestra (2000, written for Petri herself), whose trio of movements – 'Scales', 'Glides' and 'Arpeggios' – explore the orchestra's palette of colours in a variety of interesting directions, all of which are attacked with artistic gusto by the DNSO. We then switch ensembles once more, as Anthony Newman himself takes the harpsichordist's part for his 2016 Concerto for recorder, harpsichord and strings: a perkily inventive old-meets-new celebration of the recorder's Baroque heyday. We wind up with Jean Thorel conducting the Royal Danish Academy of Music Concert Band in Sean Hickey's *A Pacifying Weapon* for recorder, winds, brass, percussion and harp: a 2015 work which has the recorder playing the role of an ancient, gentle protester against the menacing, harsher forces of the contemporary world.

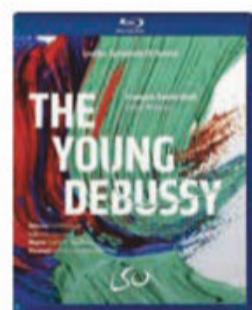
This is a multicoloured, multi-textured, multi-ensemble presentation of interesting, little-known repertoire, casting the recorder in all sorts of different stylistic and emotional guises – which makes it all the more surprising that the actual listening experience has ended up being so very samey throughout. Certainly Petri's phenomenal technique is as polished and *en pointe* as ever, and her sound as clear and sweet. However, perfection alone does not make a performance, and there's a lack of emotional fire and conviction from her

here, which has had an anaesthetising effect on the whole. As a result, none of it has grabbed me sufficiently to warrant continued listening once the metaphorical ink has dried on this review. **Charlotte Gardner**

'The Young Debussy'



Debussy Première Suite **Lalo** Cello Concerto^a
Massenet Le Cid - Suite de ballet
Wagner Tannhäuser - Overture
^a**Edgar Moreau** vc **London Symphony Orchestra / François-Xavier Roth**
Video director **Corentin Leconte**
LSO Live (F) (DVD + Blu-ray Disc) LSO3073 (90' • NTSC • 16:9
• 1080i • 24-bit 48kHz & PCM stereo). Recorded live at the Barbican, London, January 21, 2018



This film records François-Xavier Roth's first concert as principal guest conductor of the LSO, after some

years working together on mostly new music, and it has proved a fine augur of both original, French-accented programming and performances that take nothing for granted.

Without being required to work against their natures, the LSO strings cut back on the vibrato for the cascades of the *Tannhäuser* Overture, and with the brass dancing their way through the main theme à la Grétry, Roth summons up the Paris Opéra of 1861 where the opera had its revised premiere. Such stylish *Wagnerisme* sets the scene for Lalo's Cello Concerto of 1877, four years after the *Symphonie espagnole*. It receives few outings these days, but the young French cellist Edgar Moreau (b1994) is a more than worthy rival for André Navarra (in a classic account recently reissued by Supraphon, 9/17), setting a similarly challenging pace for the declamatory main theme of the first movement without resorting to the heavy exaggeration of cello lions of yore such as Rostropovich and Tortelier, and backed by exceptionally incisive support from Roth and the LSO. Moreau draws an unfashionably generous weight of tone from his 1711 Tecchler instrument but he gives a delightful lift to the slow movement's middle section, which finds Lalo at his most Spanish (and most inspired). If the assertive fanfares and fistfuls of notes wear thin before the finale has run its course, no fault can be found with Moreau and Roth.

The concert's main event was the UK premiere of a four-movement orchestral suite by the 21-year-old Debussy, and it seems inevitable that Roth's only rival on



Seriously impressive: Mari Samuelsen embraces a varied landscape from Bach to Badzura

record is himself, directing his Les Siècles ensemble (live on Actes Sud, 9/13). In fact the response of the LSO on the night was more sharply defined than the French 'period' band, no less attentive to Debussy's already well-formed orchestral imagination, warmed by more vibrato all the same, and relatively undisturbed by audience noise. So much here is prescient of later and more familiar music; and yet the nocturnal, Iberian mood of the second-movement 'Fêtes' and the erotic ebb and flow of the following 'Rêve' are worth savouring on their own terms.

From just a year or two later, Massenet's *Le Cid* ballet (1885) indulges in the most

unashamedly pictorial Spanishry on the programme, replete with castanets, tambourine and snake-hipped rhythms. Roth has the repertoire of French dance down to a T – I remember a BBC Prom where he directed Rameau with a Lully-style stick banging the floor of the podium – and he builds this six-movement suite towards a concluding 'Navarraise' of terrific swagger.

Applause between movements of the Lalo is retained – and so is Roth's gentle hint to the audience that they should save it for the end – which, in the second half, they do. Pure entertainment: I wish I had been there. **Peter Quantrill**

Holst's The Planets

Conductor **Andrew Litton** talks to Peter Quantrill about his approach to this pioneering work

Controversial is Andrew Litton's own word for his interpretation of Holst's symphonic suite. Perhaps he's a *Gramophone* reader (I didn't check). Back in December 1998, Andrew Achenbach observed certain 'controversial features' about Litton's previous recording, made for Delos with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

We come to those during the course of our conversation, but first I wonder what has changed in the intervening 20 years. 'I've just turned 60,' Litton says, 'so "Saturn" [‘The Bringer of Old Age’ in Holst’s subtitle] means a lot more to me than it did when I was a young man.' Experience also counts: Litton's score lists 35 occasions on which he has conducted the work.

In February 2017 he returned to Bergen – 'a great place to call the office for 12 years' – and recorded *The Planets* under studio conditions which he finds ideal and which freed him up in movements such as the suite's scherzo, 'Mercury'. 'We did it live in Dallas, so I guess I was a little cautious: I was trying to get it clean! Especially for a recording that I didn't want people to say it wasn't together. But such caution wasn't necessary in Bergen.'

Holst single-handedly composed the sound of outer space. He was 50 years ahead of his time – everyone helped themselves liberally to the sound he made'

While recently composed music by figures as diverse as d'Indy, Debussy, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Vaughan Williams all made their mark on Holst's score, what strikes Litton – and countless listeners – is the originality of *The Planets*. 'Just as Copland invented the sound of the Wild West, between 1914 and 1916 Holst single-handedly composed the sound of outer space. He was 50 years ahead of his time, and everyone helped themselves liberally to the sound he created. And yet he didn't set out to do that at all: what interested him were the astrological meanings of the planets, not the astronomy. But there are so many firsts about the piece.'

MARS 'It's extraordinary to start a piece in 5/4 – though I'm sure Holst knew Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, which ends with the "Danse générale" in the same time signature; what it creates in our psyche is a sense of deep unease. So does the quiet start and the *col legno* texture in the strings. It's a very abstract sound, hardly like a symphony orchestra at all.' The 5/4 time signature requires 'brain power', says Litton, 'but you get into the groove. At six bars before fig 2 the emphasis begins to shift between bars, and you have to think: 1, 2, 3, 1, 2; or 1, 2, 1, 2, 3.'

Holst cuts the metre in half to 5/2 for the movement's central section – 'so theoretically it's twice as slow, but I milk it a little bit. And I like treating the four-bar phrases as 1–1–2-bar phrases, with a bit of give and take on the dynamic



Andrew Litton first heard *The Planets* conducted by Leonard Bernstein

hairpins. I do that as well with the tempo to make it even more eerie and evil, to stress the disquieting nature of the tune.' Regimenting the euphonium melody, as it barks orders like a war-crazed general on the front, is a snare drum that reminds Litton of a Gatling gun, 'which Holst probably never heard. And yet, here it is, perfectly conveyed.'

VENUS 'We think of Venus as the goddess of love, maybe filtered through Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. But Holst doesn't go there at all. There is no sense of passion or romance until bar 26, when the cellos start emoting with this wonderfully controlled passion. I didn't realise that the winds are playing off-beats until I got hold of the score. You think that they're the ones with the pulse. And this metrical uncertainty creates an undulating sense of desire. He builds to a peak of passion at bar 58, but it disappears as fast as it arises.'

MERCURY 'Holst wasn't depicting the planets visually, and yet here we have the smallest orchestra for the smallest planet, and the textures are all quiet, spinning at great velocity.' The movement inhabits the same world as Debussy's ballet *La boîte à joujoux*, but Holst's replacement of the piano with celesta and glockenspiel intensifies the air of capricious miniaturism that's 'like a musical toybox'. The movement whirls by in 6/8, but some parts are written in 2/4. 'So there's a tension between whether it's in 2 or in 3: the melody begins in 3, then 2, then 3 again.' And between figs 7 and 8 comes the nastiest corner of the entire work for the conductor: 'The string writing is so fiddly, and then getting the winds together with the strings in bars 201 and 227 is a big challenge. It's the rehearsal killer!'

JUPITER ‘This is one of my favourite pieces.’ The boy who first heard it conducted by Leonard Bernstein at a Young People’s Concert in New York is entirely unembarrassed by the bluff humour and hustle and bustle of the opening which harks back to the first movement of Vaughan Williams’s *A London Symphony* premiered a few months before Holst began his work on the movement. Then comes the sturdy country dance: ‘This is the most controversial thing I do: although Holst writes *meno mosso* for the reprise of the theme, I feel that both statements can start slower and speed up. This adds a burlesque element, like something out of a Broadway show. I love doing it that way and it makes people smile.’

As for the hymn tune, the Princess Diana moment: how stiff should its upper lip be? Litton takes his cue from the composer’s 1926 recording. ‘At bars 203 and 219 he has everyone sliding down to the B flat, so we do it too. And I do open out at the climax in a big way. I’m sorry, I make a big deal out of it! Not that I’m apologising for my actions or setting out to be different: I want to be true to the composer, and to convey what I think works best in the piece.’

SATURN ‘When the suite is excerpted in pops concerts, they stop before this one, which is such a shame. There is real tragedy in this movement. I have the sense of an old grandfather clock in the two harps and the low flutes alternating on off-beats – the stillness and silence of someone sitting in the dark and reflecting on their life.’ Holst’s cool processional, drawing on the melody of the Russian Kontakion of the Departed, acquires a centre of gravity – until the tension and grief can no longer be restrained. ‘The biggest challenge here is the entry into the *animato*, which most of us treat twice as fast. I try not to make it sound as organised and arithmetically exact as that, because I think if he’d wanted that, he’d have written it. This section is like a cry for help, especially with the loud bells on off-beats.’ Back in 1998, *Gramophone* readers were warned about ‘syrupy violin slides’ in the coda; ‘Guilty,’ is Litton’s cheerful admission.

URANUS ‘Is it *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, or not?’ After Venus, it’s the most French movement of the piece, surely indebted as much to *Le sacre* (those savage timpani tattoos) and *Petrushka* (grumpy bassoons) as to Dukas. There are more Stravinskian rhythmic games between figs 1 and 3 – ‘really nasty. We rehearse it slowly. It’s over in 40 seconds, but it needs to be right’ – but the main challenge according to Litton lies in the articulation of the main theme, which has a quaver up-beat, not a crotchet. The conductor is looking for the element of grotesque fanfare. ‘This is not a nice magician! He’s quite evil.’

NEPTUNE ‘This movement is one of the things that makes me proudest of the new recording,’ says Litton. ‘The Grieghallen in Bergen has a proscenium stage with a shell, but behind that is all this space, and behind that is a corridor which is also full of reverb. So we placed the ladies back there, and because there are doors on either side, we were able to shut the doors just as Holst requested.’ It’s an elegant, ‘analogue’ solution which is usually solved on record with digital trickery – after all, with this piece Holst invented the ‘fade to black’ adopted by film and pop. ‘How perfect for a movement at the edge of space,’ concludes Litton: ‘The man-made satellite has hurtled into the beyond – and all this in 1914.’ **G**

► Andrew Litton’s new recording of *The Planets* is reviewed on page 55

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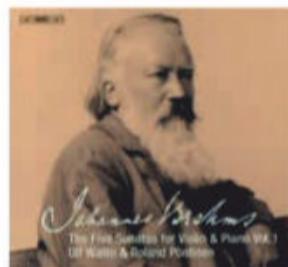
Richard Bratby enjoys a trio of very different Beethoven discs: *'I was struck not just by the lucid balance and sense of conversation, but by the feeling of improvisation'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 74**



Jed Distler listens to the debut disc by multi-percussionist Vivi Vassileva: *'What stands out is her idiomatic handling of syncopated samba rhythms, where beats are implied more than stated'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**

Brahms

'The Five Sonatas for Violin & Piano, Vol 1'
Violin Sonata No 1, Op 78. Violin (Clarinet)
Sonata No 1, Op 120 No 1. 'FAE' Sonata - Scherzo,
WoO2. An die Nachtigall, Op 46 No 4. O kühler
Wald, Op 72 No 3
Ulf Wallin vn Roland Pöntinen pf
BIS (F) BIS2369 (65' • DDD/DSD)



Let's not get embroiled in the argument as to whether there really are five Brahms violin sonatas – Ulf Wallin and Roland Pöntinen are hardly the first artists to borrow the clarinet sonatas for their own use, and they include the F minor on this first volume. They certainly have this music running through their veins, having previously recorded the sonatas (yes, all five) on Arte Nova some two decades ago. And Pöntinen was also the pianist on Martin Fröst's wonderfully mellifluous reading of the clarinet sonatas.

Their approach is along traditional lines, Pöntinen relishing the richness of the keyboard-writing, Wallin luxuriating in the beauty of the string lines. Inevitably a switch from clarinet (or viola) to violin in the First Clarinet Sonata creates an edgier sound world and occasionally I found Wallin a little unbeautiful in tone in some of the louder writing (for instance, the first movement, from 3'19", where Fröst has the requisite drama but a more ingratiating sound), though their handling of the coda is nicely done. They take a spacious view of the slow movement, possibly too much so, but the more flowing passages are well judged. Their finale is a particular highlight, truly *vivace*, with Pöntinen making light of Brahms's challenging keyboard-writing, which contrasts well with the moments of greater lyricism.

The *FAE* Scherzo scores highly in terms of dramatic impetus, and the players maintain a strong sense of narrative

throughout, right up to the resolute switch to the major at the very end.

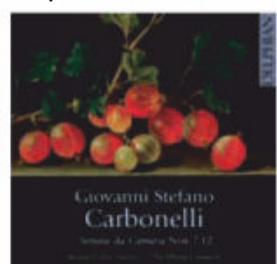
At the outset of the First Violin Sonata they are less inward than Tasmin Little and Piers Lane in their recent set. But turn to Nikolaj Znaider and you're in a different league altogether – combining intensity of musical vision with an old-world warmth of tone and, in Yefim Bronfman, one of the most outstanding Brahmsians around. Wallin and Pöntinen are, by comparison, a touch too deliberate at the build-up to the climax at 6'18" (track 6), where Little has more impetus, albeit with a sometimes astringent tone. The *Adagio* is an unhurried affair, the piano introduction perhaps a little on the stolid side, certainly compared to Bronfman, with Wallin responding with a warm Romanticism. The passage of dotted writing (from 1'50", track 7) hasn't quite the sense of build-up of some, though the relaxation when we finally arrive in the major (from 4'13") is affectingly done. The finale works well, the two players bringing a sinuous quality to its narrative, Wallin fining his tone down with finesse and both players alive to its copious switches in mood.

They close with two transcriptions of Brahms songs, both of which are given with plenty of affection but are perhaps just a little too laboured tempo-wise. The recording is a very fine one, which balances the players most naturally. **Harriet Smith**

Violin Sonata No 1 – selected comparisons:
Znaider, Bronfman (7/07) (RCA) 88697 06106-2
Little, Lane (4/18) (CHAN) CHAN10977
Clarinet Sonata No 1 – selected comparison:
Fröst, Pöntinen (4/06) (BIS) BIS-SACD1353

Carbonelli • Vivaldi

Carbonelli Sonate da camera Nos 7-12
Vivaldi Concerto, 'Il Carbonelli', RV366
Bojan Čičić vn The Illyria Consort
Delphian (F) DCD34214 (78' • DDD)



When Bojan Čičić and his Illyria Consort gave us the first six of Carbonelli's set of

12 violin sonatas (8/17), it was by no means a foregone conclusion that the second half of the set would follow, so this sequel is welcome indeed.

For those in need of a quick refresher, Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli (1694-1773) was one of the many Italian violinists who arrived on British shores from the late 17th century onwards. Also, indeed, one who stayed, anglicising his name after his naturalisation in 1735 to John Stephen Carbonell and enjoying a successful musical career on London's various stages before switching career to become an equally successful wine merchant. His 12 violin sonatas are his only surviving music; Nos 8, 9 and 11 are appearing here as debut recordings, so this second instalment means we now have the entire set on disc for the first time.

However, it's worth noting that this sequel doesn't simply serve up more of the same. For starters, in addition to the violin-plus-continuo sonatas, there's a larger-forces surprise (two violins, viola, cello, double bass, harpsichord and theorbo) in the form of Vivaldi's *Il Carbonelli* Concerto in B flat, whose nickname – penned on the manuscript by Vivaldi's German pupil Pisendel – presumably signifies that Carbonelli played it for an admiring composer in Venice around that time. Here it appears crisp and buoyant, with the engineering giving a bright, ear-grabbing immediacy to the sound, without trying to smooth off too many of the period instruments' rough edges. Try Čičić's first solo entry at 0'30" for size.

When we get to the sonatas, it's clear that Carbonelli himself has not stood still. For instance, the second movements are no longer fugal. Also there are interesting stylistic originalities such as No 8's ditching of the slow-fast model in favour of a central pair of *allegros* followed by a slow extended reprise of the sonata's attractive opening 'Pastorale'. Throughout the six Čičić (still on his c1680 Ruggieri) is as much a joy as last time for his superlative virtuoso technique and

energetic poetry. Meanwhile, the continuo is also still constantly ringing the colouristic changes, David Miller switching between theorbo, archlute and Baroque guitar, and Steven Devine between harpsichord and organ, with the whole expertly underpinned by Susanne Heinrich's seven-string bass viol.

With such wall-to-wall elegant exuberance and excellence on show across both discs, you shouldn't hesitate in adding them as a pair to your collection.

Charlotte Gardner

Croes

'La sonate égarée'
Six Sonates en trio, Op 5
BarrocoTout
Linn F CKD597 (62' • DDD)



This is so delicious that it's tempting simply to suggest that you go and buy it. But of course I'll elaborate.

BarrocoTout comprise traverso flautist Carlota Garcia, violinist Izana Soria, cellist Edouard Catalan and harpsichordist Ganael Schneider. This, their debut disc, was part of their prize for winning the 2017 York Early Music Young Artists Competition. As for their composer of choice, Antwerp-born Henri-Jacques de Croes (1705–86) is a shadowy figure. Historically speaking, we know a certain amount: he was a talented violinist whose career was mostly played out as leader of the court orchestra in Brussels, with composing duties part of the package, and his music was expected to align with the reigning Charles of Lorraine's taste for an unstuffy Italianate rococo *galant* style in keeping with that of Louis XIV's court in Paris. In terms of his musical legacy, however, there's very little left. In fact this Op 5 set of six trio sonatas was until recently considered lost; and indeed, while in practice it's only No 6 that was previously thought to be genuinely lost (since half the sonatas are copies of pieces already published in Op 1), it might as well have been the lot of them, so little attention have they received.

Back to these four young players, and while normally I'd dismiss as meaningless marketing twaddle the mission statement on their website declaring 'BarrocoTout plays early music with contemporary passion', I'd say that in this case it's actually hitting on something very real about this group, even bearing in mind that that's what you want of any musician

GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Bojan Ćićić

The baroque violinist considers the little-known music of Giovanni Carbonelli

How did you discover this set of sonatas?

I initially stumbled across Carbonelli's name in a music publisher's catalogue, and then got in touch with Michael Talbot, who had prepared the edition, after reading his essay on Carbonelli's life and work in London. It was a fascinating account of this little-known 18th-century musical figure: he was very well regarded during his lifetime but fell into relative anonymity after his death. My hope is that this recording will help to bring him back into the spotlight for modern audiences.

As an Italian living in London, what were the main influences on Carbonelli's style?

The most obvious influence is that of Arcangelo Corelli. It is difficult to draw any conclusions based on only one surviving opus, the 12 violin sonatas we have recorded, but his style seems to favour a type of composing that aims for sophisticated beauty rather than virtuosic amazement. Carbonelli also worked at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane as leader of the orchestra, and you can hear an element of the English quirkiness found in theatre music of the time. As a performer, it's up to you to overcome the many technical obstacles he puts in your way in order for the audience to enjoy the simple beauty he is trying to achieve. This music doesn't belong to the Vivaldi, Locatelli or Biber style of writing that plays into the performer's hands by showing our ability to the audience very easily. Its difficulty lies hidden and should remain so, I think. If the listener goes away having experienced what



they perceive as really beautiful, logical music, I know that I've done my job.

What sets Carbonelli's music apart from his contemporaries?

It's interesting to look at what happened after Carbonelli's career as a violinist in London: he became a very successful wine merchant. This might have been because he couldn't compete with the influx of younger, predominantly Italian violinists to London, with their more *galant* style of composing. On the other hand, Sonata XI offers us Carbonelli at his most virtuosic and modern, showing that he was neither completely stylistically calcified, nor immune to modern developments in violin technique.

Why haven't other violinists championed this music?

Why modern baroque violinists have stayed away from Carbonelli is beyond me. Perhaps we live in an era when it's much harder for musicians to take risks, because we have to be extremely careful to choose the right project in which to invest our own time and effort, and money. But if the story of Carbonelli's discovery tells us anything, it is that as long as you have passion for what you do, others will follow.

playing any non-contemporary music. Perhaps it's in the sheer freshness and fire behind their sound from the outset of No 1's opening *Allegro*. Or perhaps it's the almost indecent playful sensuousness heard after a further minute, via the fluttering trills from the flute and violin joined smartly together in minor sixths; I'm talking both texture and inflection here, with the whole still feeling thoroughly courtly and dignified. Think naughty tickles in Versailles corridors, clothes still on.

What else? Well, there's the lyricism and grace of the duetting in No 2's

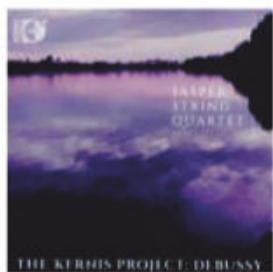
central *Adagio* at 0'41", when the violin first enters to bring its own spin on the flute's ornately but delicately embellished opening melody. Or the nimble, unforced drama Catalan brings to the busy bass line of No 5's opening *Allegro*. Also the beautiful interplay between all four in No 6's central *Grave*, and here I must also comment that Schneider's harpsichord-playing throughout is a joy.

Can this really be a young ensemble recording their first disc? Or, indeed, could only a young ensemble have produced this? Either way, I love it.

Charlotte Gardner

Debussy · Kernis

'The Kernis Project: Debussy'
Debussy String Quartet, Op 10
Kernis String Quartet No 3, 'River'
Jasper Quartet
Sono Luminus (F) DSL92233 (63' • DDD)



As viola player Sam Quintal's introductory note celebrates, this disc

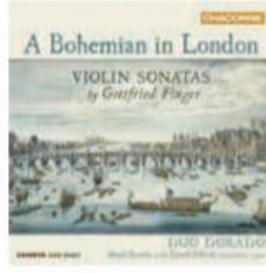
'marks the culmination' of the Jasper Quartet's 10-year involvement with Aaron Jay Kernis's string quartets. Having played and recorded the first two, they commissioned a Third from him in 2015, a work that 'surpassed its two preceding quartets in complexity and difficulty' and of which they made this recording in December 2017. Having the composer's idiom so firmly under their fingers now, I do wonder about that 'culmination'; I can quite imagine Kernis (b1960) might have a few more quartets in him for so committed and virtuosic an ensemble.

The Third Quartet, subtitled *River*, is cast in a Bartókian five-movement design, three substantial spans – 'Source', 'Mirrored Surface – Flux – Reflections' and 'Mouth/Estuary' separated by two shorter interludes, 'Flow/Surge' and 'Cavatina' (this last a hangover from the composer's original intended model of Beethoven's Op 131). Ebb and flow, 'change and flux' are the key elements throughout, with some vividly imagined and intense writing in the outer movements and moments of real delicacy between. The powerful image of the river that runs through the whole work (from source to estuary, indeed) derives from Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, though Karl Ove Knausgaard's autobiography proved even 'more vitally influential' for the work's musical processes. The Jasper Quartet's account is compelling.

The quartet's previous discs paired Kernis's First Quartet, *Musica celestis*, with Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* (9/12^{US}) and the Second, *Musica instrumentalis*, with Beethoven's Third 'Razumovsky' a year later (2/12^{US}). For No 3, they move away from the Classical era for the coupling, Debussy's enchanting early Quartet of 1893. It makes for nice contrast and the Jasper's performances of both are flawless in ensemble and intonation, expressively assured and beautifully balanced. The sound quality is first-rate. **Guy Rickards**

Finger

'A Bohemian in London'
Thirteen Sonatas
Duo Dorado
Chandos Chaconne (F) CHAN0824 (78' • DDD)



Gottfried Finger (1655–1730) is one of those figures you might know from mixed-composer discs but rarely find as a sole occupier. A recorder sonata or two, a sonata for trumpet (an instrument he played) – these are what you usually come across. His sonatas for viola da gamba (another of his instruments) have also been recorded. But the only other thing the London-resident Bohemian is known for is coming fourth and last in a competition to set Congreve's *The Judgement of Paris* in 1701, and complaining as he left England in high dudgeon that he 'had thought to be judged by men, not by boys'. Exactly how justified his sour grapes were we cannot know, because sadly his setting is long lost (it would make a good find for someone); but certainly he was well thought of by his London peers.

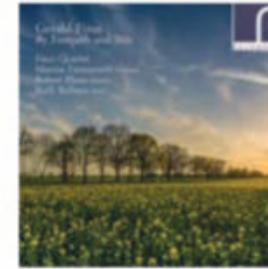
Finger's violin sonatas are mostly new territory, then. Duo Dorado violinist Hazel Brooks numbers 20 in her enthusiastic and informative booklet notes, and the fact that she has recorded 13 of them, totalling 78 minutes, suggests that she would have done them all if she could. Even 13 make this recording more of a document than a sit-down listen, mind; but while the music may be best consumed in small bites, it is soundly written, and with its patchwork mix of the style Finger would have learnt from the likes of Biber back in his Bohemian homeland (double-stopping, rolling variation-sets and a certain richness and weight), the fashionable and more shapely manner of Corelli, and the occasional whiff of homely English melody, it has a plucky character of its own.

Brooks and her keyboard partner David Pollock provide thoroughly clean and competent performances, respectful of the music and careful of overbearing it with excessive ornamentation and other additions – which is not to say that Pollock's continuo-playing does not succeed in finding variety from just a harpsichord and a firmly focused chamber organ. Not compulsory listening really, but certainly a well-executed presentation.

Lindsay Kemp

Finzi

Five Bagatelles, Op 23^a. By Footpath and Stile, Op 2^b. Elegy, Op 22. Interlude, Op 21^c. Prelude. Romance, Op 11
^bMarcus Farnsworth bar^cRuth Bolister ob
^aRobert Plane cl Finzi Quartet
Resonus (F) RES10109 (73' • DDD)



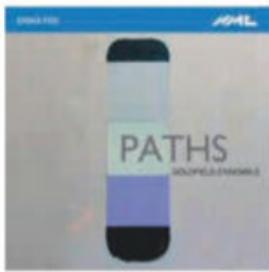
Originally issued in 2012 as a digital-only offering, this lovely Finzi programme now makes a welcome debut on silver disc. The composer's first work to appear in print, the 1921–22 song-cycle *By Footpath and Stile* sets six poems by Thomas Hardy for baritone and string quartet, its chamber instrumentation following the example of George Butterworth's (then recently published) *Love Blows as the Wind Blows* and Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge*. Marcus Farnsworth sings with beguilingly fresh timbre and winning strength of characterisation, and his nourishing partnership with the Finzi Quartet has ravishing poise, tenderness and depth of expression to commend it. Likewise, oboist Ruth Bolister shines in the Interlude, a splendidly inventive, harmonically tangy and impeccably crafted essay dating from 1933 (and much admired by, among others, Rubbra and Vaughan Williams).

Commissioned by David Campbell and the Endellion Quartet to celebrate the composer's centenary in 2001, Christian Alexander's deft arrangement of the popular *Five Bagatelles* is wonderfully served here, with BBC National Orchestra of Wales principal clarinet Robert Plane's characteristically unruffled, golden-toned contribution a constant source of pleasure. Of the three remaining items (all fashioned by Alexander at the behest of the Finzi Quartet), I find myself especially taken with the posthumously published Prelude (its part-writing discreetly peppered with false relations), but both the Romance and Elegy come off beautifully, too.

Production values (courtesy of Resonus's founder Adam Binks) are all one could desire. In other words, if you missed out on this delectable release first time round, you've no excuse now. **Andrew Achenbach**

E Fox

'Paths'
Café Warsaw 1944^a. Malinconia militaire. On Visiting Stravinsky's Grave at San Michele. Paths Where the Mourners Tread^a. Quasi una cadenza
Goldfield Ensemble / ^aRichard Baker
NMC (F) NMCD254 (77' • DDD)



Erika Fox – like Alexander Goehr, four years her senior – came to England with

her family as a small child in the 1930s, to escape Nazi persecution. She has declared that ‘my music owes almost nothing to Western musical tradition, and almost everything to my childhood memories of Jewish liturgical chant and fragments of Hasidic melody’. Nevertheless, the four compositions on this disc, written between 1980 and 2005, have a much wider expressive profile than such purely ethnic aspects might suggest; and with that profile comes impressive technical resourcefulness. It’s all a long way from mere idiosyncrasy.

Take *Quasi una cadenza*, a 13-minute piece for clarinet, horn and piano, which manages to transform the expansive sense of freedom that cadenzas in concertos often display into a shapely structure that builds to a powerfully dramatic conclusion. The material, conveying an engaging variety of moods, has the kind of rhapsodic spontaneity that, in the earlier *Paths Where the Mourners Tread*, leads to a certain looseness of

form. But even there – the title is a line from Philip Larkin – the blend of the elegiac and the abrasive is compelling, and very well conveyed by these performers in a recording that catches the evolving interactions of the ensemble with vivid immediacy.

You might expect a composition called *On Visiting Stravinsky’s Grave at San Michele* to intensify the elegiac tone but it is launched with a positively jaunty idea – the composer calls it ‘bold and direct’ – as if to encapsulate that special Stravinskian energy and confidence which Fox has found inspiring. Here too an unambiguously positive spirit is at work, and the formal plan of bringing initial contrasts gradually closer together, so that difference transforms into connectedness, is particularly satisfying.

The last two works both have wartime associations. In *Malinconia militaire*, from 2003, Fox channels her concerns over the Iraq war through music inspired by a poem called ‘Webern Opus 4’ by Amelia Rosselli, an Italian writer and musician whose father and uncle were murdered for their resistance to Mussolini, while *Café Warsaw 1944* references a poem by Czesław Miłosz mourning friends who did not survive the Second World War. In both, Fox does justice to these potent

poetic resonances in textures that move persuasively between haunting laments and vigorous affirmations – and the use of percussion in *Café Warsaw 1944* is especially telling. On this evidence, more of Erika Fox’s music on disc would be very welcome. **Arnold Whittall**

Holliger · Kurtág

Zwiegespräche

Holliger Airs. Berceuse pour M. Lecture. Die Ros’ (Angelus Silesius). Sonate **Kurtág** Angelus Silesius: Die Ros’. Einen Augenblick lang... Ein Brief aus der Ferne an Ursula... für Heinz... Der Glaube (Péter Bornemisza). Hommage à Elliott Carter... (Hommage à Tristan). In nomine - all’ongherese (Damjanich emlékkö). Kroó György in memoriam. Lorand Gaspar: Désert. Rozsnyai Ilona in memoriam... ein Sappho-Fragment. Schatten... summaia a BP. Versetto (apokrif organum)

Sarah Wegener sop **Heinz Holliger** ob/cor ang/pf

Marie-Lise Schüpbach ob/cor ang

Ernesto Molinari bcl/contrabass cl

ECM New Series 481 8265 (74' • DDD)



This disc celebrates the 80th birthday of Heinz Holliger, and although it explores

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his interpretative gifts as a performer rather than his full range as a composer, its focus on the dialogues between his own music and that of Györg Kurtág (*b*1928) makes for a beautifully rounded double portrait.

That this is an intensely intimate retrospective is clear from the very first item, Kurtág's gentle, heartfelt tribute to Holliger's harpist wife Ursula, who died in 2014. Its poignancy is all the greater since it sounds almost like an impersonation of one of Elliott Carter's late instrumental miniatures – and Carter, who wrote so memorably for both the Holligers, had himself died just a few months before. But Kurtág, like Holliger, owes even more to the astringent yet profoundly lyrical expressiveness of Webern, and this quality often surfaces, sometimes with touches of un-Weberian irony, in works like Kurtág's *Hommage à Elliott Carter* and ... (*Hommage à Tristan*), which condenses Wagner's sublime five-hour portrayal of death and transfiguration into a mere 40 seconds for oboe and bass clarinet. As you might imagine, every note counts!

The two most substantial works by Holliger himself are satisfactorily well contrasted. His 1999 revision of his Sonata for solo oboe (1955–56) remains the work of a phenomenally gifted student, spinning out long lines exuberantly and eloquently to show off the player's virtuosity of breath control and digital dexterity. But *Lecture* for oboe and cor anglais (2015–16) is altogether more powerful in execution and original in conception. Based around seven poems by Philippe Jacottet – the poems themselves are heard in readings by the author before each of the musical 'settings' – Holliger packs a whole world of refined and inventive poetic play into a sequence of short movements, the longest less than six minutes. These performances, by Holliger and Marie-Lise Schüpbach, are simply astonishing in their fluency and range of colour, and the depiction of a kind of transcendent avian mayhem in the final movement, 'Oiseaux', has to be heard, and reheard, to be believed.

For the opposite extreme to Holliger's six minutes of dazzlingly diverse sound patterns, you can then move on to Kurtág's six-minute *Kró György in memoriam* for contrabass clarinet, in which only a few barely audible, grief-stricken sounds drift past to disturb the silence. Króó was a respected Hungarian musicologist and Kurtág's tribute seems like a very personal farewell to an era of extreme delights and horrors, in which music of genuine vision and deep feeling somehow failed to be totally suppressed. **Arnold Whittall**

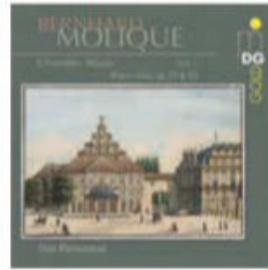
Molique

Piano Trios - Op 27; Op 52

Trio Parnassus

Dabringhaus und Grimm Ⓜ MDG303 2116-2

(64' • DDD)



Bernhard Molique (1803–69) is one of those composers who, revered and highly respected in their time, have slipped between the cracks into undeserved obscurity. His Violin Concerto No 3 and Flute Concerto, for example, while not the works of a genius, certainly justify *Grove's* (first edition) estimation of Molique, praising 'the serious character and the fine workmanship of his compositions'.

Marking the sesquicentenary of his death, the ever-enterprising Trio Parnassus give us the world-premiere recordings of his two piano trios. The Op 27 Trio of 1846, championed by Hans von Bülow (who rated the work above the trios of Schubert and Schumann), has an exhaustively worked first movement – I love the way the players open the door to this work – followed by second and third movements (Scherzo and *Adagio*) of a unique construction: after the Scherzo and Trio, both played with all their repeats, a short cello cadenza leads *attacca* to the *Adagio*, which is frequently interrupted by the main theme of the Scherzo. The finale is a rondo. Lasting just short of 34 minutes, the Trio is a meaty addition to the genre with appealing themes and plenty to keep the musicians (especially the pianist) on the qui vive.

The Op 52 Trio, completed in London in 1855 and again in four movements, is a more conventional affair with some attractive Mendelssohnian touches. What raises the music above its solid German craftsmanship and ideas which stay consistently just this side of memorable is the playing of the Parnassus Trio. Somehow, through its various reincarnations (the present line-up is, I think, the sixth), the ensemble has remained the same in terms of tone, balance, musical refinement and character. Cellist Michael Gross, the only member of the original ensemble, is now matched with younger colleagues Julia Galić and Johann Blanchard, both already fine, seasoned chamber musicians, but you would be hard-pressed to tell them apart from the trio that gave us, for example, the benchmark recording of Hummel's complete piano trios over 30 years ago. MDG's recording and the disc's booklet, the delightful

conceit of which is in the form of an interview with the composer, are further bonuses for the intrepid explorer of forgotten 19th-century repertoire.

Jeremy Nicholas

Mozart

'The Jupiter Project: Mozart in the Nineteenth-Century Drawing Room'

Piano Concerto No 21, K467 (arr Cramer).

Symphony No 41, 'Jupiter', K551 (arr Clementi).

Overtures (arr Hummel) - Le nozze di Figaro;

Die Zauberflöte

Katy Bircher fl/Caroline Balding vn

Andrew Skidmore vc David Owen Norris pf

Hyperion Ⓜ CDA68234 (80' • DDD)



David Owen Norris plays a gloriously resonant Broadwood and his colleagues play appropriate 18th- (or 17th-) century instruments. The music is Mozart, refracted through the prism of his contemporaries. Orchestral and operatic music like this was often arranged for domestic performance; in the case of the music on this disc, each of the arrangers was a virtuoso pianist in his own right.

Naturally, therefore, the lion's share of the work falls to the tireless Norris. Flute, violin and cello are largely confined to colouring lines already present in the piano part's right or left hand. In fact, one has the unfamiliar sensation of wishing for more from the flute in the two overtures (one of them, after all, is named after it!). But the piano is the star here, and it sounds as if these arrangements would, for the most part, be just as persuasive if the single-line instruments were absent.

It's true that arranging a piano concerto for this 'Jupiter ensemble' irons out to some extent the contrast between *tutti* and solo. The two overtures, too, cannot convey the nervous energy of the orchestral versions. But the *Jupiter* itself is an unmitigated triumph. This work is tricky enough – especially in the breathtaking counterpoint of the finale – when played as a piano duet. Performing it with only two hands, in an arrangement that preserves nearly every polyphonic strand, is a brilliant tour de force, with the invaluable bonus of the finale's second repeat being taken, heightening the effect of the work's cathartic coda.

At this point in a review of this sort of project it's customary to add the caveat that these arrangements can't begin to do justice to Mozart's original conception of

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FOR VIOLA [DA GAMBA] AND HARPSICORD



HMM 902259

Photo: Philippe Matsas

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The very different timbres of the clarinet and marimba complement each other on Richard and Mika Stolzman's 'Palimpsest' – see review on page 75

these works. In this case, thanks to four fully committed musicians – primarily the indefatigable Norris – that's poppycock. The *Jupiter*, especially, is required listening. **David Threasher**

Mozart

Violin Sonatas – No 21, K304; No 23, K306; No 27, K379; No 28, K380

Mi-Sa Yang vn **Jonas Vitaud** pf
Mirare F MIR420 (79' • DDD)



Mi-Sa Yang and Jonas Vitaud have hopped over Mozart's childhood piano and violin sonatas and gone straight for the gold in this four-strong programme: a pair each from the 1778 (K304 and 306) and 1781 (K379 and 380) sets, published respectively in Paris and Vienna just before and just after his final resignation from Archbishop Colloredo's straitjacketing court life.

The first thing to hit your ears in the opening K379 is the delectable combination of timbres from Yang and Vitaud's modern instruments. Softly

sparkling, delicately jewel-like from Vitaud, drawing all the plus points and none of the negatives of employing a modern concert grand in this repertoire. Then Yang sounding darkly stringy and lean, vibrato used sparingly.

Indeed, 'less is more' is the order of the day here. Beautifully so too, although for some it might be a little too ... little. Take the variations of K379 where, by and large, their approach to the repeats is simply to add ornamentation (and Yang's ornaments in the first half of Var 3 are really delectable). Then compare it to the subtle colouristic and articulatory contrasts of Petra Müllejans and Kristian Bezuidenhout (Harmonia Mundi, 6/09), or the even more pronounced shifts – portamentos even – to be heard from Itzhak Perlman and Daniel Barenboim (DG). Likewise compare the gentle shift of mood in Isabelle Faust and Alexander Melnikov's K304 *Allegro* first-half repeat (Harmonia Mundi, 11/18) to the pretty much verbatim one of Yang and Vitaud.

This particular sonata indeed breathes into being slightly too serenely for my ears, in the context of its being written over the fateful Paris trip that saw the death of Mozart's mother. Still, from

Vitaud's bar 69 second-movement rubato upwards climb it does feel as though we're in new, deeper emotional territory, with an extra degree of fragility and feeling from Yang; and from here the meticulously thought-through rubatos, tempo changes and fluctuations in urgency had me in their thrall. There's also no arguing with the slender-toned lyricism and subtle sense of drama and fun (deliciously weighted pauses) they bring to K306's operatic finale. Other draws are Yang's barely-there *pianissimos* throughout; the multicoloured architecture and coy rubato employed by Vitaud in his K379 Var 5 solo (where incidentally there is a dynamic shift with the repeat, Yang bringing the volume of her already-whispered pizzicato down even further); and overall the sympathetic sense of conversation between the two of them.

Will this become one of my go-to Mozart sonata recordings? Honestly, probably not when there's such stiff existing competition. However, it's nicely done, and certainly worth checking out if you're after a non-period-instrument recording which yet sounds elegantly on the cusp of it. **Charlotte Gardner**

GRAMOPHONE Collector

A BEETHOVEN TRIO

Richard Bratby never ceases to wonder at the genius of Beethoven, and the rewards reaped by different approaches to his chamber music



Trio Con Brio, here with their producer Bernhard Gütter (standing), bring a feeling of space to Beethoven

Imagine being at one of Beethoven's chamber music premieres, like Ignaz von Seyfried in 1799. 'Now his playing tore along like a wildly foaming cataract, and the conjuror constrained his instrument to an utterance so forceful that the stoutest structure was scarcely able to withstand it; anon he sank down, exhausted, exhaling gentle plaints, dissolving in melancholy ...' Critics don't often get to write like that in 2019, but with the 2020 Beethoven anniversary approaching perhaps we need to rediscover that sense of astonishment, of disbelief; of being overwhelmed by an imagination that leaves mere words sprawling in the dust. Because – make no mistake – there'll be a steady supply of commentators trying to shrink his genius to something relative; to tell us that we're bored of Beethoven.

Happily, it seems that performers haven't received that particular memo, and nor have record labels. I predicted back in January that **Trio Con Brio**'s *Archduke* Trio was going to be worth a listen; well, here it is, and if it isn't quite what I expected, that's intended as a compliment. First up comes the Piano Trio Op 1 No 3 – the work which Haydn, famously, feared would be too advanced for the Viennese public – and I was struck not just by the lucid, unforced balance and sense of conversation (a characteristic of their series so far), but by the feeling of improvisation;

of three players moving forwards together into a strange and wonderful new world.

That carries over, on an epic scale, into the *Archduke*. It's unmistakably chamber music, but pianist Jens Elvekjaer unfolds the opening melody with a glorious feeling of space. The whole piece has an atmosphere of sunlit lyricism; its meaning lying not so much in big climaxes (the *valse brillante* episode of the Scherzo initially sounds almost reticent) as in, say, the quiet glow of the *Andante* and the way the witty, brightly articulated dance rhythms of the finale feel as if they're merely a foreground detail in a much vaster landscape.

That's one way of renewing Beethoven. In their 'Beethoven Plus' series on Somm, violinist **Krysia Osostowicz** and pianist **Daniel Tong** have found another – commissioning companion pieces from living composers for each of the Beethoven violin sonatas. So before their expansive, lived-in reading of Beethoven's Op 96, there's a Sonatina by David Matthews that shrinks Beethoven's gestures to haiku proportions. The A major sonata, Op 30 No 1, is preceded by a touching journey from anguish to tranquillity by Kurt Schwertsik (apparently he was inspired by the Heiligenstadt Testament) and the *Kreutzer* Sonata gets an encore: a *Tarantella furiosa* by Matthew Taylor that starts where Beethoven's finale leaves off before heading off in wholly unexpected directions.

By and large, the idea works well. Osostowicz and Tong sound just as much at home in the new works as in the Beethoven – perhaps more so, in the case of a rather restrained-sounding *Kreutzer*. Op 96 is the pick of the Beethoven interpretations here: broad and reflective, with occasional flashes of something more fierce from Osostowicz. A sophisticated reading to conclude a fascinating and often rewarding pair of discs.

But the **Eybler Quartet**, in their journey through the Op 18 String Quartets, propose the most radical idea of all: taking Beethoven at his word. They attempt, as far as is humanly or musically possible, to follow his precise metronome markings, and that the result is so disconcerting is itself a reflection on modern performance conventions. The slightly underpowered violin tone and drab recorded sound rapidly cease to matter as the first movement of the C minor Quartet (No 4) hurtles forwards (no C minor-mood emoting on the G string here), the Scherzo unwinds like clockwork and the Minuet positively rockets away. There's a hint of a let-up in the finale – and indeed the A major Quartet (No 5) seems to fit these leaping tempos a lot more comfortably. Perhaps that's just my post-Romantic prejudices showing.

In any case, while the B flat Quartet (No 6) initially sounds like an *opera buffa* patter-song (with all the energy and sparkle that implies), the *Adagio* probes real depths; lovely, profound playing that also – what do you know? – sets up to perfection the relationship between the slow *Malinconia* sections of the finale and its skittering *Allegretto quasi allegro*. I've been playing and listening to this quartet since I was a teenager and I've rarely heard quite such a persuasive QED. So there's a thought to take into the big anniversary year: there's still nothing more surprising than playing exactly what Beethoven wrote. **G**

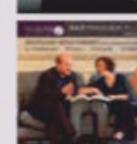
THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven Piano Trios, Vol 3

Trio Con Brio

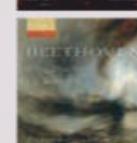
Orchid Ⓜ ORC100101



Various Cpsrs 'Beethoven Plus, Vol 2'

Krysia Osostowicz, Daniel Tong

Somm Ⓜ SOMMCD0197-2



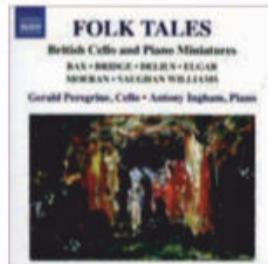
Beethoven Stg Qts, Op 18 Nos 4-6

Eybler Quartet

Coro Ⓜ COR16174

'Folk Tales'

'British Cello and Piano Miniatures'
Bax Folk Tale Bridge Cradle Song. Spring Song
Delius Caprice. Elegy. Romance **Elgar** Romance, Op 62
Moeran Irish Lament. Prelude
Vaughan Williams Fantasia on Greensleeves. Six Studies in English Folk Song
Gerald Peregrine vc **Antony Ingham** pf
Naxos 8 574035 (54' • DDD)



At the heart of this recording of British post-Romantic cello miniatures is an exploration of music from that wonderfully fertile period during the first half of the 20th century in which the singing voice of the cello enjoyed a particularly propitious relationship with the prevailing lyrical ideals of its composers. This is brought out with sympathy and variety by Gerald Peregrine and the discerning support of Antony Ingham, whose plangent chemistry communicates the melancholy tinge that inhabits all corners of this fragile repertoire.

Peregrine and Ingham bring a pleasing shape to the premiere recording of the cello version of Elgar's Romance, Op 62, for bassoon and orchestra, though, for all the sensitivity of the characteristically faltering phrasing, I admit to missing the ever-changing, interjecting timbres of Elgar's orchestration. The folk idiom of Vaughan Williams's *Six Studies in English Folk Song* (1926) and the *Fantasia on Greensleeves* (which sounds particularly well in the cello's tessitura) are gently nuanced and this insight is extended to the neglected but no less delightful *Irish Lament* (1944) and *Prelude* (1943) by EJ Moeran, who wrote them for his wife, Peers Coetmore. The two pieces by Frank Bridge – the 'Spring Song' from *Four Short Pieces* for violin and piano (1912) and *Cradle Song* (1910) – embody that first flush of romantic lyricism in the composer's style which erupted in his suite *The Sea* (1911). Bax's *Folk Tale* (1918), his first solo work for cello and the most substantial work here, has a narrative quality in its Celtic muse, amounting in many ways to a miniature tone poem. Perhaps most revealing, however, are the three euphonious short essays of Delius – the *Romance* (1918) and the *Caprice and Elegy* (1930), written with Fenby's assistance. Here the melodious dimension of the composer's gift (often ignored in favour of his unique harmonic language) is allowed to shine through with special luminosity. **Jeremy Dibble**

'Palimpsest'

JS Bach Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, BWV903 (arr R Stoltzman) **McKinley** Mostly Blues - Nos 2, 8 & 12 **Piazzolla** Fuga y misterio. Tango-Étude No 5 **Ravel** Pavane pour une infante défunte **Zorn** Palimpsest
Richard Stoltzman cl **Mika Stoltzman** marimba
Pedro Giraudo db **Héctor Del Curto** bandoneón
Avie AV2409 (59' • DDD)



Clarinet and marimba make an odd couple. Their timbres are almost diametric opposites – one warm and creamy, the other cool and bone dry – and it's because of these stark differences, perhaps, that they complement one another so well. What's more curious, to my ears, is the stark contrast in performance style. Richard Stoltzman's playing is quite free and ruminative. In his arrangement for solo clarinet of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy*, for example, he replaces the florid virtuosity of the original keyboard-writing with something far more introspective. Indeed, he seems to be searching every scale and ornamental flourish for its expressive possibilities. What's lost in this lovingly detailed approach, unfortunately, is a sense of the music's large-scale phraseology and architecture.

Mika Stoltzman plays her transcription of Bach's Chaconne with greater rhythmic rigour than her husband, yet her interpretation feels similarly contemplative, and her delicate touch brings an unexpected and touching fragility to this monumental work. Of course, the Chaconne lacks the improvisatory flair of the Fantasy; but even in the Fugue – where the two play together, joined by a bandoneón (another unlikely yet compatible partner) – she seems to be the one steering the steady course.

In Piazzolla's *Fuga y misterio* (from the tango opera *Maria de Buenos Aires*), Ms Stoltzman is a bit too straight, rhythmically speaking, despite the oddly relaxed tempo. This is urban music that requires urgency and at least a hint of menace. Also, given that the Bach and Piazzolla arrangements are textually faithful to the originals, I was surprised that their version of Ravel's *Pavane* is not and sounds more like a loosely impressionistic jazz improvisation.

Aside from the Chaconne, the most compelling performances are of William Thomas McKinley's charming *Mostly Blues* miniatures and John Zorn's *Palimpsest*. These works were written for the

Stoltzmans, and both composers capitalise effectively on the instruments' – and the performers' – differences.

Andrew Farach-Colton

'Singin' Rhythm'

Abe Variations on Dowland's Lachrimae Pavane
Cruixent Marimba moksha, Op 46. El parío, Op 47 **Dinicu** Hora staccato **Espel** Zamba para escuchar tu silencio **Pereira** Bate coxa **Sammut** Sailing for Phil **Vassileva** Kalino mome **Vassileva/Diniz** Pipero misturado
Vivi Vassileva marimba/vibraphone/perc
Lucas Campara Diniz gtr **Vivi Vassileva Quintet** Alpha ALPHA463 (60' • DDD)



'Singin' Rhythm' finds multi-percussionist Vivi Vassileva pursuing

all directions at once, from marimba soloist to bandleader, in a cross-section of music encompassing a contemporary classical solo, Brazilian pop-based fare and several original compositions. The disc opens with Guillo Espel's *Zamba para escuchar tu silencio*, treated as a gentle unaccompanied marimba ballad. Only in its energetic third movement does Eric Sammut's *Sailing for Phil* aspire beyond pleasant pabulum. By the third piece, Marco Pereira's *Bate coxa*, Vassileva's virtuosity comes into its own, egged on by guitarist Lucas Campara Diniz's nimble fingerpicking. The duo next turn in a deliciously succinct *Hora staccato*.

Oriol Cruixent's *Marimba moksha* mainly stands out for Vassileva's idiomatic handling of the music's syncopated samba rhythms, where beats are implied more than stated. Following her sensitively nuanced reading of Keiko Abe's *Dowland Variations*, Vassileva multitracks herself on various percussion and mallet instruments for her own *Kalino mome*, which I find more interesting in the louder, denser passages than in the rambling solo marimba parts. *Pipero misturado*, a joint composition with Diniz, features the kind of low-key yet pleasant contrapuntal interplay patented by the Modern Jazz Quartet 50-plus years ago. The harmonic predictability of Cruixent's *El parío* renders the ensemble's refined execution ideal for background listening. I hope that the Vassileva Quintet's next release will be more musically adventurous and daring. **Jed Distler**

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Ernst Haefliger

He was a musician's musician, an indispensable can-do tenor whose singing career spanned six decades. Joshua Cohen pays tribute to a man whose achievements were many and varied

‘The first change is if you are 30. Then the easy going is over. If you overcome that, the next is in the fifties. If you get past that you can keep going. Naturally, you lose tones; you lose the strength of the muscles. But I realise much better now what you have to do.’ It was a windy October evening in 1989, and the veteran Swiss tenor Ernst Haefliger (1919–2007) was describing the physical transitions a singer has to surmount in order to sustain a long career. The man himself was 70 years old and had been singing professionally for nearly half a century. Our interview took place in a small apartment down the street from the New England Conservatory (NEC) in Boston, where he was conducting a series of masterclasses that singing teachers all over town were advising their students to visit. A few weeks later he flew to Tokyo to sing in the *St Matthew Passion*, returning to the States after the holidays for a Schubert concert in New York and another round of masterclasses at NEC.

On February 9, 1990, the septuagenarian tenor sang Schubert's *Winterreise* at NEC's Jordan Hall, accompanied by his son, Andreas Haefliger. I remember that his voice sounded compact and precisely focused, even silvery at times, though audibly frayed at both ends of its range. His sense of phrasing and attention to textual meaning had lost none of their acuity. What astonished everyone, however, was the intensity of his performance, a tenacious energy and concentration that seemed to carry him through the entire mammoth song-cycle. It added up to a triumphant vindication of spirit, musicianship and professional

craft. In subsequent years his health and stamina declined, but he continued to perform into the new millennium, crowning his 60-year career with worldwide appearances as the speaker in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*.

It had been a career of distinction, though not one you would necessarily describe as ‘iconic’. Haefliger was admired in his day as a ‘musician's musician’ rather than as a superstar. In the course of our evening he revisited several

highlights of his career: singing under the composer's baton; recording *Das Lied von der Erde* with Bruno Walter; a Berlin opera production of *Così fan tutte* staged by Carl Ebert; a daring recital programme that paired Janáček's *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* with Schoenberg's *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*; a concert of medieval chansons with a period-instrument band led by Hindemith; and legendary performances of the *St Matthew Passion* with Pablo Casals (whose complimentary note on the title page of Haefliger's score remained a cherished possession). He would have been the last to claim he could sing anything, but he managed to encompass a little bit of everything. He was the indispensable can-do tenor of the post-war years.

I sometimes wonder, though, whether his versatility might not in some degree have diffused his image in the eyes of posterity. Even in his best repertoire – Bach, Mozart and German Romantic song – he never acquired the mystique his most celebrated contemporaries possessed. It was not so much a question of artistry per se as that of a glamour or personal flair that simply were not part of

He sang Bach's Evangelist with unforgettable intensity, reliving the events as if he'd witnessed them himself

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1942 – *Career began*

He made his professional debut in Zurich as the Evangelist in Bach's *St John Passion*, and created the part of Tristan in Frank Martin's oratorio *Le vin herbé*. Later he went on to create the tenor roles in Martin's *In terra pax* and *Golgotha* and the role of Tiresias in Orff's *Antigone* (Salzburg, 1949).

• 1952 – *Joined Städtische Oper Berlin*

His career as an opera tenor moved into high gear in 1952 when he joined the Berlin opera, then under the directorship of Ferenc Fricsay. Specialising in Mozart and other light-to-medium lyric roles, he went on to sing at Glyndebourne (1956), Salzburg (1961–62) and Chicago (1966), retiring from the opera stage in 1974.

• 1963 – *New York St Matthew Passion under Pablo Casals*

From Haefliger's student days at the Geneva Conservatoire, Bach remained the alpha and omega of his musical life. At Carnegie Hall in June 1963 he appeared in the *St Matthew Passion* under Casals, singing both the Evangelist and tenor solos in an English translation. An NPR tape (never released commercially) shows him at his vocal peak, articulating the English text with astonishing clarity and fluency.

• 1971 – *Joined faculty of Munich conservatoire*

In the second half of his career Haefliger devoted a large portion of his time to teaching. In 1983 he published a book on the history of singing and vocal pedagogy titled *Die Singstimme*.

• 1981–2002 – *Long twilight*

A critically acclaimed recording of Schubert's *Winterreise* (Claves, 2/81) restarted Haefliger's fading career. Over the next two decades he sang Lieder and concert music all over the world, culminating with performances of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* (including a 2002 BBC Proms appearance, aged 83, which can be viewed on YouTube).



Haefliger's make-up. He sang Mozart exceptionally well, but without quite the elegance and finish of Léopold Simoneau. He gave wonderful Lieder recitals (and made many fine recordings), but always under the looming shadow of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. His only equal as a Bach Evangelist was Peter Pears (the two even sang together in some performances of the *St Matthew Passion*, alternating the roles of Evangelist and aria soloist); but there was an ethereal quality to Pears's voice (hauntingly captured in the works of Britten) that seemed particularly suited to the spirituality in Bach's music. And although Haefliger was probably the leading German-speaking lyric tenor in the 1950s, the '60s brought forth a charismatic rival: Fritz Wunderlich, with his golden tone and God-given liquid ease.

How best, then, to characterize Haefliger's qualities as a singer? The late American baritone Barry McDaniel, who sang with him many times in the '60s and '70s, described his impressions of him in an online interview: 'He was not a relaxed

singer. When I stood beside him I could feel how every muscle of his body was being used. A music critic here in Berlin ... [wrote] that one must be impressed and moved by the enormous concentration of his "*unbedingter Einsatz*". I can't find a good translation for this phrase. It pulls together such terms as determination, struggle and concentration.' That intense concentration of body and spirit was necessary for projecting a smallish voice into a big hall, and for ensuring that every word was audible, the rhythmic pulse was always felt, and every phrase – however long, angular or florid – had a definite contour and a clear destination. It also lent a special poignancy to his tone in high-lying music.

The physical tension involved had its downside too, which could affect his vocal quality, making it turn throaty and constricted under stress. Sometime in the late 1950s his soft-grained tenor consolidated into a sturdier instrument, enabling him to tackle some strenuous assignments such as Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, Kodály's *Psalmus hungaricus*, and (on records only) Florestan. This expansion of dramatic range intensified the emotional power of his performances, but sometimes (not always) at the expense of lyrical freshness and pliancy. But the truth of the matter is that Haefliger's voice and musicianship were indivisible. His versatility compelled him to develop a distinctive but limited instrument into more than the sum of its parts. And it was always an expressive sound, with a characteristic fervour that seemed imprinted into the grain of the voice.

He was probably at his greatest as the Evangelist in the Bach Passions, which he delivered with unforgettable intensity, reliving the events – arrest, trial, crucifixion and burial – as if he had witnessed them himself. His recordings with Karl Richter, which also include several cantatas, capture him at his peak: manly, fervent and undaunted by the technical challenges. Haefliger's other claim to greatness lay in Lieder. The Schubert song-cycles recorded by Claves in the 1980s show his well-preserved voice to advantage; but to hear him in his prime you must go to his Deutsche Grammophon recordings from the late 1950s to the early

'60s, last available on an 11-disc album released in Japan a quarter-century ago. The good news is that DG has recently issued a 12-CD centenary anthology which includes all of the Lieder recordings, some unpublished material as well as numerous operatic excerpts. This makes a beautiful tribute to a singer-musician of high aspiration and noble achievement. **G**

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Bach

St Matthew Passion
Ernst Haefliger ten
Kieth Engen bass
Antonie Fahberg sop
et al; Munich Bach Ch & Orch / Karl Richter
Profil (5/59)

Instrumental



David Threasher welcomes another volume of Peter Donohoe's Mozart: 'For a pianist who has played Prokofiev at the highest level for so long, a delight in strings of semiquavers is no surprise' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



Jeremy Nicholas hears Georgijs Osokins's Rachmaninov: 'The transcriptions provide further evidence of Osokins's stylistic identification with Rachmaninov's idiom' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**

JS Bach

Four Lute Suites

Franz Halász *gtr*

BIS BIS2285 (83' • DDD/DSD)



Franz Halász does something interesting here. Well, of course he does – you've

heard his Henze, Berio and Takemitsu ... not to mention his Piazzolla, Mompou and, yes, his Bach (the three Solo Violin Sonatas).

He is one of those guitarists – others are Sharon Isbin, definitely Tilman Hoppstock, who provided the booklet notes – who successfully combine historically informed practice with modern guitar technique to produce something original. But Halász's lavish ornamentation – his trills, turns, mordents, divisions, appoggiaturas, arpeggiation, *notes inégales* and all the rest – nearly amount to recomposition. Even *campanella* effects, changes in tone colour and that kind of almost capricious rubato that Segovia was famous for ('it may not be of any structural importance, but let's just stop here to savour this note for its own sake') are ornaments of the sort you might almost equate with the burr and shavings left by a burin's incisions in metal, were they not themselves so precisely weighted to reveal the import of a phrase or a progression. The C minor and E major Suites are arranged by Ansgar Krause, the other two by Halász. All are performed in their original keys. The preludes – especially that of the E minor Suite – are suitably improvisatory, declamatory and dramatic; the faster dances are ecstatic, the slower ones intensely meditative.

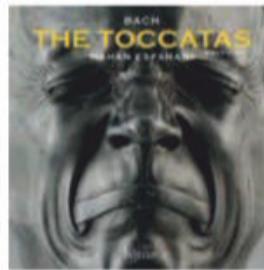
Only Hoppstock is as prodigious an embellisher. But he is less demonstrative, even circumspect. Halász is more individualistic, extrovert. This is not a criticism of either; it is merely a question of taste. The discerning listener will love both. **William Yeoman**

JS Bach

Toccatas, BWV910-916

Mahan Esfahani *hp*

Hyperion CDA68244 (77' • DDD)



The element most characteristic of the toccata – from the earliest lute and keyboard pieces in 16th-century Italy to more recent examples by composers as varied as Vierne, Ravel, Debussy, Vaughan Williams, Britten, Prokofiev, Kabalevsky, Kapustin and Adams – is the spirit of improvisation. And surely it is an air of spontaneity that unites the seven formally diverse Toccatas of Bach, thought to have been composed at Weimar when he was still in his twenties.

Mahan Esfahani, the Iranian-American harpsichordist now based in Prague, has chosen the Toccatas as the first release of his renewed relationship with Hyperion (having decamped temporarily to DG). He plays a 2018 harpsichord from the workshop of Jukka Ollikka in Prague, after Michael Mietke, 'with the hypothetical addition of an extra soundboard for the 16' register and a cheek inspired by Pleyel, 1912'. In the abstruse booklet notes, Esfahani cites some 18 sources he used to compile his own 'variorum' text for the recording.

Yet, despite the ostensible intellectual rigour of the presentation, the quality one most yearns for in these performances is that key element of improvisatory spontaneity. Esfahani's rhythm can be mechanistically relentless for long stretches, seemingly disregarding what we know of Baroque dance. This rigidity of pulse is combined with a reluctance to exploit the naturally rich, sensuous sonorities of the harpsichord, hobbling its ability to sing. Taken as a whole, in place of the imaginative freedom inherent in Bach's Toccatas, Esfahani's approach sounds unyielding, pressured and constrained.

Rather than exultation in the grandeur of open D major sonorities at the beginning of BWV912, we hear a hectic pile-up of descending chords, devoid of sensuality or breathing space. The ensuing *Allegro* speaks more of crafty ill-temper than rustic jauntiness. The gripping pathos of the *Adagio* of BWV913 is obscured by weirdly elaborate couplings which result in muddy sonorities. Rigidly sharp-edged, jabbing figurations in the fugal finale of BWV914 have more in common with the uncompromising angles of 1950s brutalist architecture than with the fluid contours of Baroque architecture or painting.

If, as some publicity has suggested, this is indeed the beginning of a series of recordings that will encompass all of Bach's harpsichord music, we have a long road in front of us. **Patrick Rucker**

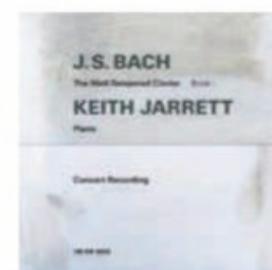
JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 1, BWV846-69

Keith Jarrett *pf*

ECM New Series ② 481 8016 (104' • DDD)

Recorded live at Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, NY, March 7, 1987



This previously unreleased live performance of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*

Book 1 took place in March 1987, just one month after Keith Jarrett recorded the 24 Preludes and Fugues in the studio for ECM. Although his straightforward and often matter-of-fact Bach-playing proves fairly consistent between both versions, sonic considerations may factor into how one perceives the interpretations by way of the smooth and rounded patina conveyed by the studio engineering versus the closer, leaner, more intimately scaled concert recording.

For example, the C major Fugue's *strettos* seem more sharply contoured live than in its relatively generalised studio counterpart, whereas the suave studio C minor Prelude turns noteey and grey in



Guitarist Franz Halász brings an extrovert individuality to Bach's lute suites

front of an audience. The studio ambience undermines the G minor Prelude's chains of trills, which gain definition thanks to the live traversal's tighter pickup. Jarrett's fluidly understated studio A minor Fugue retains its basic tempo throughout, whereas the pace slightly speeds up in the live version. On the other hand, the relatively dutiful and square studio B minor Prelude comes out of its shell a month later, replete with an altogether lighter touch and arching line on Jarrett's part. The leaner live engineering also conveys a sense of transparent linear interplay in both the B flat minor Prelude and Fugue.

Other interpretative variants in the present recording can be ascribed to Jarrett's free will, or perhaps it's the adrenalin talking. How else might one explain his C sharp minor Prelude's newfound freedom and rhetorical flexibility? The A minor Fugue remains buoyantly understated, except that the tempo gets a tad faster as the music progresses (better than the opposite!). The briskly dispatched A major Fugue's cross-rhythmic phrases become less emphatic and more conservational now, while both the F major Prelude and Fugue truly take wing.

For all of Jarrett's seriousness and concentration, I miss the colour, the

nuance, the finely honed degrees of touch and the range of expressive variety characterising a good number of Book 1 piano recordings; Ewa Pobłocka's extraordinary recent release is a case in point.

Then again, can the greatest Bach pianists deliver a totally improvised solo concert from scratch on Jarrett's stunning creative level? **Jed Distler**

Selected comparisons:

Jarrett (10/88) (ECM) 835 246-2

Pobłocka (3/19) (NIFC) NIFCCD062/3

Busoni

'Piano Music, Vol 11'

JS Bach/Busoni Ten Chorale Preludes. Prelude, Fugue and Allegro, BWV998 **Busoni** Preludio al corale e fuga sopra un frammento di Bach (Edizione minore della Fantasia contrappuntistica, K256a). Sonatina No 5, 'Sonatina brevis in signo Joannis Sebastiani Magni', K280

Wolf Harden pf

Naxos ® 8 573982 (69' • DDD)



Busoni's music can on occasion remind me of that quip by Eduard Hanslick when

he encountered Brahms's Fourth Symphony for the first time: 'All through I felt I was being thrashed by two terribly clever men.' When it's played with true understanding, with mental and physical virtuosity held in perfect accord, it comes truly alive – think of Hamelin, Levit or Ogdon. Unfortunately, though Wolf Harden is absolutely committed to his music, it frequently sounds overly earnest. He begins with the Fifth Sonatina, giving its striking discord with due élan, but the fugal writing (from 1'42") is pretty unyielding; Hamelin by comparison is much more supple in effect.

From here, Harden moves on to the *Preludio al corale e fuga sopra un frammento di Bach* – not the one we know from the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* but rather an 'Edizione minore' – which he plays with absolute conviction, although again there's a relentless quality, particularly in the fugues, that prevents the music from coming to life. The transcription of Bach's Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat for lute sets off more promisingly, with a freely flowing Prelude, but the Fugue's voicings are less than subtle and some of the semiquaver fingerwork in the *Allegro* is a touch uneven.

Wolf Harden ends with the glorious set of 10 Chorale Preludes, making slightly

heavy weather of the exultant ringing of *Komm, Gott Schöpfer*, BWV667; he fares better in *Wachet auf*, BWV645, though still sounds overly cautious compared to Demidenko's sleeky honed reading. The grave beauty of *Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr*, BWV639, is also compromised by lumpy trills and a lack of a real line – how much more beautiful it is in Andsnes's hands. In *Durch Adams Fall*, BWV637, an already austere chorale becomes merely leaden, while in the ebullient *In dir ist Freude*, BWV615, he again makes us overly aware of the complexity of Busoni's texture, Demidenko conveying its joy far more palpably. **Harriet Smith**

Chorale Preludes – selected comparison:

Demidenko (HYPE) CDA66566, CDA67324

Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr – selected comparison:

Andsnes (11/06) (EMI/WARN) 341682-2

Sonatina No 5 – selected comparison:

Hamelin (11/13) (HYPE) CDA67951/3

Franck

Trois Chorales. Grande pièce symphonique,

Op 17. Pastorale, Op 19

David M Patrick org

Guild (F) GMCD7816 (69' • DDD)

Played on the organ of the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban

Franck

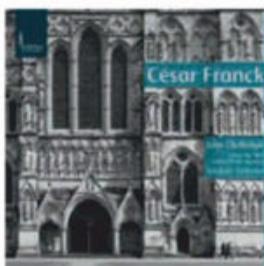
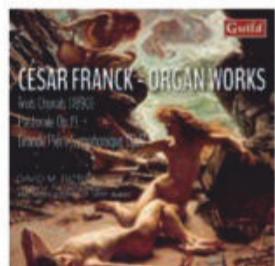
Cantabile. Trois Chorales. Pièce héroïque.

Prélude, fugue et variation

John Challenger org

Salisbury Cathedral (F) 5029385 848811 (69' • DDD)

Played on the 1876 Father Willis organ of Salisbury Cathedral



Two Englishmen playing César Franck on two English cathedral organs. You would have thought they would have much in common, but these two discs are about as different as chalk and cheese.

David M Patrick has been one of the leading British organists in the interpretation of the French Romantic repertory for well over half a century. In that time he has clocked up an impressive discography which reveals both his instinctive understanding of this repertory and his ability to root out convincingly Francophone qualities from English organs. His latest release on the Guild label finds him on the Harrison & Harrison instrument of St Albans Cathedral. Once again, he finds some distinctly French sounds and, aided

and abetted by Paul Crichton's sensitive engineering, recreates that glittering, overwhelmingly bright upper register which is such a characteristic of French instruments.

The sound may be convincing but the playing is rather less so. At an age where most of us are slowing down, Patrick seems to be speeding up, and his brisk, almost obsessively driven performances too often skate over interpretative detail. He rattles the *Trois Chorales* off in a mere 37'39" (Challenger takes over six minutes longer), reading the A minor's *Quasi allegro* more like a *vivacissimo* and clipping off the phrases so abruptly that Franck's long and measured silences seem more awkward than restful.

Meanwhile, John Challenger, on the magnificent Salisbury Cathedral Willis, makes no pretence at sounding French. Rather, he luxuriates in the big-boned Britishness of this splendid instrument, turning Franck's generously proportioned structures into monumental, statuesque edifices, full of pomposity, regality and opulence. While it is understandable that this first-ever release on Salisbury Cathedral's nascent record label is focused on showing off the sound the instrument makes, Challenger does not forget the integrity of Franck's creation; and while it does not possess any of the Cavaillé-Coll flavouring which Franck built into his organ music, Challenger realises the core of the musical inspiration sufficiently well for it to shine through even in these relatively unfamiliar clothes.

Both discs make up weight with a sprinkling of Franck's other pieces. Patrick gives us a somewhat urgent account of the *Pastorale* but a truly invigorating one of the *Grande pièce symphonique* which, with his instinctive understanding of organ tone, high level of virtuosity and a lifetime immersed in this musical idiom, produces something very special indeed. For his part Challenger selects three pieces with showcasing potential for an instrument he so clearly adores. His take on the *Pièce héroïque* is rather histrionic but he gives a fine feeling of substance to the Fugue in the *Prélude, fugue et variation*, while the *Cantabile* has real warmth in both the sound and this deeply affectionate performance.

Marc Rochester

Haydn

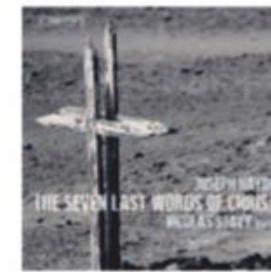
Die sieben letzten Worte, HobXX:1c.

Sonata (Un piccolo divertimento: Variations), HobXVII:6

Nicolas Stavy pf

BIS (F) BIS2429 (63' • DDD/DSD)

From Mandala MAN5106 (2006)



The fact that the keyboard version of *The Seven Last Words* has come down to us in an arrangement not by Haydn himself, albeit one heartily approved by him, has not deterred a number of pianists from recording the work. The French pianist Nicolas Stavy recorded the work in January 2006 in Paris. That recording, originally released on the Mandala label, has been remastered by BIS. Stavy plays a Steinway (serial number and vintage not indicated in the booklet) owned by Pierre Malbos, using the first of two actions for the instrument for the *Seven Last Words* and the second for the F minor Variations.

Stavy is ever the gentle, inviting guide to this extraordinary score which, with the possible exception of Liszt's *Via Crucis*, is without parallel in the solo piano literature prior to Olivier Messiaen. Throughout the nine movements (the first is an introduction, the ninth depicts the earthquake), he resists any temptation to overplay. Following the relative tranquillity of 'Father forgive them', 'This day you will be with me in paradise' achieves genuine pathos, the left-hand Alberti figurations handled with great delicacy. Haydn's motivic allusions to the *Stabat mater* chant are clear but subtle. 'Mother, behold thy son', the longest of the sonatas, is a model of tender restraint. As the polyphonic complexity increases in 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me', Stavy successfully combines the elements of prayer and anxiety.

The same sensitivity to voice-leading that characterises the *Seven Last Words* is amply evident in the F minor Variations. These double variations, composed between Haydn's two London trips, offer greater opportunity for variety of touch and dynamic. Stavy's approach is deeply personal, yet always faithful to the expressive dictates of the score.

Sensitive performances and generally good recorded sound make this a release that will please both Haydn devotees as well as those whose discovery of these masterpieces is a source of envy.

Patrick Rucker

Haydn

Symphonies (transcr Stegmann) - No 44, 'Trauer'; No 75; No 92, 'Oxford'

Ivan Ilić pf

Chandos (F) CHAN20142 (69' • DDD)

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Francesco Piemontesi

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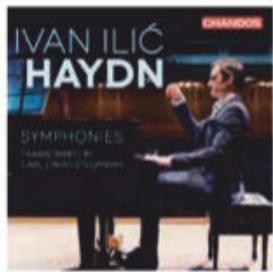
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Carl David Stegmann (1751–1826) was a composer, conductor and tenor based

mainly in northern and eastern Germany. Alongside his own music, he also made transcriptions of music by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and others for the Bonn publisher Simrock. These three symphonies are from a collection of 25 (in two sets) he prepared in the years following Haydn's death; Ivan Ilić reports in the booklet the sequence of events that led to his discovery and performance (perhaps the public world premieres) of a handful of them.

Transcriptions such as these can only really be considered successful if they convey to a reasonable degree the brilliance of the originals on which they are based. Stegmann finds some ingenious solutions to the problems of transferring music for strings, wind, brass and drums to the piano: for example, the increasing speed of the accompanying figures in the opening *Presto* of Symphony No 75. The sound can be needlessly thin, though, with bass lines often remaining at written pitch, rather than dropping the octave to mimic the bass string instruments. Neither can the piano sustain like muted strings in the same symphony's slow-movement variations or the ecstatic *Adagio* of No 44.

Much of this is Stegmann's fault; so too, presumably, are occasional departures from what Haydn actually wrote – but then, we don't know how corrupt his source material might have been. All the same, Ilić might have made more of Haydn's dynamics, for example the *fz* markings that litter No 44 or the rustic horns in the Trio of No 92. Also absent is the nervous energy that drives Haydn's faster music. No 92's freewheeling finale should almost trip over itself, its boisterous theme and harmonic trajectory spinning to the very limits of coherence. Rather than scampering impishly, here it sounds more like traversing a rocky outcrop in stiletto heels. Turn to the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and René Jacobs (Harmonia Mundi, 5/05) to hear how it should really go; to Tafelmusik under Bruno Weil (Sony Classical, 7/95) to hear the *Trauer*'s finale bristle with barely concealed ire; and to Thomas Fey in Heidelberg (Hänssler Classic, 6/08) to hear No 75's *Presto* played with a brilliance and vigour beyond the limits of any pianist. **David Threasher**

Henriques

Aphorisms, Op 6 - No 4, Jeg elsker. Erotik, Op 15. The Picture Book. Silhouettes, Op 38
Christina Bjørkøe *pf*
Dacapo *F* 8 226150 (82' • DDD)

Henriques

Ballerina, Op 51. Berceuse. Canzonetta, Op 27. Erotik, Op 56. Grief. Kleine bunte Reihe, Op 20. Mazurka, Op 35. Nordic Dance. Novellettes, Op 26. Petite Valse. Religioso, Op 34. Romances - Op 43; 'Late Summer', Op 50 No 1. Wiegenlied. Witches' Dance
Johannes Søe Hansen *vn* Christina Bjørkøe *pf*
Dacapo *F* 8 226151 (77' • DDD)

Henriques

Children's Poetry, Op 30. Melodic Album, Op 50.

Miniature Water-Colours, Op 21

Thomas Trondhjem *pf*

Danacord *F* DACOCD840 (80' • DDD)



The Danish composer Fini Henriques (born Valdemar Fini Henriques, 1867–1940) is not nearly as well known today as he deserves. A close contemporary of Nielsen, no mean miniaturist himself (as his many songs attest), Henriques had an innate mastery of small-scale forms and a gift for melody that is hardly less impressive than that of Grieg, Nielsen and Sibelius in their lighter pieces. Stylistically, Henriques could adopt various manners, some more or less close to composers from Bach (the 'Quarrelsome' number in the *Melodic Album*, 1919) to Nielsen (as in the *Andante sostenuto* of the *Novellettes* of 1905) or generic salon music, as in the *Petite valse*, a lovely, undated inspiration thought to be from around 1920.

In the booklet note to Christina Bjørkøe's delightful disc of piano pieces, Claus Røllum-Larsen comments that Henriques was 'almost unrivalled in his ability to compose small pieces with a sharp characterisation – works with charm and warm-heartedness', noting also that 'charm and warm-heartedness' applied equally to the composer, 'so there was complete agreement between the man himself and his music'. Every one of the 121 pieces gathered across these three discs (with not a single duplication) confirms the

annotator's asseveration, whether the charming 'The Little Jockey', the 16th piece of the children's collection *Billedbogen* ('The Picture Book', 1899), the brilliant, brief 'Will-o'-the-wisp', the penultimate number of *Miniatur-Aquarelles* ('Miniature Water-Colours', 1900) or the light-hearted 'Yes-men', the third movement of *Kleine bunte Reihe* (1899) for violin and piano. This last set of six pieces also features a 'Mosquito Dance' that casts a sly glance at Rimsky's bumblebee!

Henriques had a decided knack for juxtaposing series of smaller pieces into larger collections, as we have on the two piano discs, each featuring satisfying larger sets the individual components of which can be played independently. Thomas Trondhjem's disc features three such collections, all receiving their first recordings. *Børnelyrik* ('Children's Poetry', 1908) is a collection of 20 miniatures which, like *Billedbogen*, should be as well-known as Nielsen's *Music for Young and Old*. The *Melodic Album* comprises 22 tiny gems, the longest, 'At the Grave', running to 2'44" while seven are under a minute, the shortest, 'Hunt the Thimble', a mere 32 seconds. It forms part of a collection of works published as Op 50, which includes the beautiful Romance 'Sensommer' ('Late Summer') for violin and piano. *Miniatur-Aquarelles* is yet another set aimed at children, 10 charming character sketches covering pets, the one times table and song forms, among others.

Of the two piano solo discs, Bjørkøe's has the edge in repertoire, featuring two of Henriques's finest collections, *Billedbogen* and *Melodiske profiler* ('Silhouettes', 1911). The latter collection, which was published originally in two separate volumes of 10 items apiece, is more adult-focused, the subjects ranging from the natural world – 'Ivy', 'The Turkey Cock' – to states of mind: 'In a Sombre Mood', 'Longing' or the concluding 'Resignation'. Where Henriques's expressive range shows its limitations is in his various attempts to portray or illustrate eroticism; each disc has an example of this and the results are genteel, even twee, with nothing, say, of Scriabin's more ecstatic visions.

In terms of sound, Bjørkøe is slightly better served by Dacapo's sound quality and acoustic – Danacord's for Trondhjem seems a little airless and two-dimensional by comparison, although fine enough on its own terms. With no repertoire clashes, both discs are recommendable, as is the violin disc – Henriques was a viola player and violinist, playing in the Royal Danish Orchestra and his own string quartet – on which Johannes Søe Hansen is right inside



Sensitivity and intelligence: Francesco Piemontesi plays Liszt's second book of *Années de pèlerinage*

the idiom, very nicely accompanied by Bjørkøe. Each disc is a joy. **Guy Rickards**

Janáček

In the Mists. On an Overgrown Path.
Reminiscence. Sonata 1.X.1905, 'From the Street'.
Thema con variazioni, Op 1
Jan Bartoš pf
Supraphon ® SU4266-2 (76' • DDD)



Jan Bartoš follows up his first two Supraphon releases respectively devoted to Mozart concertos (10/17) and Beethoven sonatas (A/18) with an all-Janáček release that easily stands alongside reference Janáček offerings from Rudolf Firkušný (DG, 6/72), Charles Owen (Somm, 7/03) and Håkon Austbø (Brilliant Classics). Like his erstwhile teacher Ivan Moravec, Bartoš accepts and internalises Janáček's intimate, conversational sound world for what it is, while imbuing the composer's often stark textures with a fullness of tonal body and shimmering translucence.

At the same time, classical reserve and textual honesty prevail. In the Sonata's *Adagio*, Bartoš is one of the few pianists to make the composer's distinct *marcato* and

staccato directives meaningfully audible. In the opening and closing sections, you'll hear how Bartoš (as well as Moravec) abruptly releases the sustain pedal so that the quirky semiquaver rests truly register. Even in a catalogue awash with fine renditions of *In the Mists* (the songful intimacy of Piotr Anderszewski's live Carnegie Hall recording remains quite special – Virgin/Erato, 8/09), Bartoš uncovers fascinating details to savour. In the third piece, he imparts more of an upbeat lilt to the left-hand line than commonly heard, and observes the central *appassionato* section's unrelenting accents without overbuilding the climax and consequently losing the narrative flow. And Bartoš conveys subtle yet noticeable distinctions between the final piece's rapid shifts between *Presto* and *Meno mosso*, an effect easier said than done.

Bartoš's gifts for finely honed characterisation further come home to roost throughout the *On an Overgrown Path* selections. Note, for example, his discreet shifts of emphasis on the repeat in 'Our Evenings', the perfectly timed *accelerando* and return to tempo in 'Come with us!' or how the gradations of timbre in 'Unutterable Anguish' underscore the middle voices' implicit commentator role. Although Janáček's early *Theme and*

Variations contains only traces of his mature style, his sly assimilations of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms are not blatantly derivative. Bartoš clearly relishes details such as Var 3's obsessive rhythms, while he sings out Var 6 from the bottom up, letting the plangent bass lines lead.

The booklet notes are given over to an extensive conversation between Bartoš and the musicologist Jiří Zahrádka that explores this repertoire in great depth, providing a valuable adjunct to an excellently engineered and highly satisfying release that no Janáček lover should miss. **Jed Distler**

Liszt

Années de pèlerinage - année 2: Italie, S161.
St François d'Assise: La prédication aux oiseaux, S175 No 1

Francesco Piemontesi pf
Orfeo ® (CD + DVD) C982 191
(62' + 80' • DDD • NTSC • 16:9 • s)
DVD includes *Italie* and 'Traveling with Francesco Piemontesi', a film by Roberta Pedrini



Perhaps if he'd lived today, Liszt would have contented himself with

Instagram selfies alongside Raphael's *Lo Sposalizio* and Michelangelo's *Il Penseroso* from the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, possibly imitating the pose of the sculpture and tweeting how much he'd enjoyed reading Petrarch's sonnets and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Sadly deprived of such modern marvels, he instead created his own imagined new world in his three volumes of travel chronicles, in which artistic forms, poetry and expressions of divine love cohabit and feed into one another.

Like the first instalment of Francesco Piemontesi's *Pèlerinage* project (8/18), his follow-up adds visuals to the mix, with a DVD documentary consisting of location-shot excerpts. I was hoping for a more artistic exploration of the relation between sight and sound in Roberta Pedrini's film; instead she simply intersperses filmed piano-playing of each piece with short interludes that vary from a quick snap of Michelangelo's work and Florence to an interview in which Piemontesi gives a brief but charming introduction to the 'Dante Sonata'. Perhaps the best thing about the film is the chance to hear the sonnets of Petrarch read in Italian. The music of the words in the vernacular suggests that this may have determined Liszt's responses as much as the meaning and subject matter.

On the CD, Piemontesi shows the same qualities of sensitivity and intelligence that come across in the film. But he does have a tendency to apply a coating of passion and exultation to almost everything – a thin coat, admittedly, for the most part, and one that at times actually helps to keep the piece alive. This is less than subtly applied in the Sonata. Here, compared to Daniel Barenboim, for instance, Piemontesi sounds emotionally monochrome and less alive to the nuances of the work's dramatic unfolding.

Barenboim, and in particular Kathryn Stott, also lend the Petrarch Sonnets a greater degree of poetry and narrative quality, without ever descending into mannerism. Listen, for instance, to how Stott keeps the singing quality in Sonnet 47, even as she creates an oasis of near-timelessness. Compared to these and to Arcadi Volodos's dazzling yet highly rhetorical account of the two opening numbers of the set, Piemontesi draws a more literal, straightforward picture. Volodos also brings superior individuality and variety of tone and texture to the first of the two *Légendes*. Given the voyage focus of the series, I wonder if the supplementary *Venezia e Napoli* might have made for a more convincing filler. Despite close recorded balance, the piano sound itself is pleasantly warm. **Michelle Assay**

Sposalizio, Il penseroso, Légende – selected comparison:

Volodos (7/07^R) (SONY) 88697 09612-2

Dante Sonata – selected comparison:

Barenboim (7/94^R) (ELAT) 2564 61780-2

Petrarch Sonnets – selected comparisons:

Barenboim (3/81^R) (DG) 435 591-2GGA

Stott (8/90^R) (SONY) 88875 13562-2

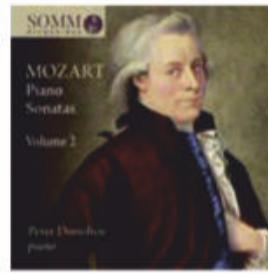
Mozart

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 2'

Piano Sonatas - No 7, K309; No 8, K310; No 9, K311. Rondo, K511

Peter Donohoe *pf*

Somm Céleste *®* SOMMCD0198 (61' • DDD)



The second instalment of Peter Donohoe's Mozart survey was recorded as recently as this March. He and Somm's recording team return to the Birmingham Conservatoire and to a Bechstein piano that sounds ideal in this music – beautifully sonorous but without the brashness a Steinway might have brought to it. The sonatas are the trilogy composed during Mozart's ill-fated trip of 1777-78 via Mannheim to Paris, during which the gradual break from his father – both emotionally and artistically – became more inevitable, exacerbated by his mother's death in July 1778.

Donohoe takes each work at face value, keeping shifts of tempo and impromptu ornamentation to a minimum but still playing with the sensitivity that was palpable in Vol 1 (4/19). Nos 7 and 9 don't enjoy the profile of the A minor Sonata, No 8, but Donohoe is alive to the almost symphonic dimension of the writing in the outer movements of each. You can tell he particularly enjoys those moments during which the music is at its most 'fingery' – for a pianist who has played the likes of Prokofiev at the highest level for so long, a delight in strings of semiquavers is no surprise, and he purrs through passages that can so often otherwise sound effortful. And playing a work such as the later A minor Rondo (1787) without artificially applied interpretative mannerism sells it at its full worth.

Peter Donohoe's late rapprochement with Mozart has come as a surprise to some. Outside of the obvious 'hits', much of this repertoire remains obstinately underrated, so it's very much to our benefit that a pianist of his personality and musicianship has chosen to engage with it with such seriousness of purpose.

David Threasher

Rachmaninov

Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op 22.

Barcarolle, Op 10 No 3. The Dream, Op 38 No 5

(arr Wild). Fragments, Op posth. How fair this spot, Op 21 No 7 (arr Volodos). In the silence of the secret night, Op 4 No 3 (arr Wild). Mélodie, Op 3 No 3. Now lettest thou depart, Op 37 No 5 (arr Osokins). Vocalise, Op 34 No 14 (arr Richardson/Wild/Osokins)

Georgijs Osokins *pf*

Piano Classics *®* PCL10166 (62' • DDD)



The Latvian-born pianist Georgijs Osokins was one of six artists who, having failed to reach the finals of the 2015 Chopin Competition, received honourable mentions. Reading the biography accompanying this disc, one might think he had won first prize for, described by critics as 'exceptional and unpredictable', his performances 'received either superlatives or led to controversy'. He is certainly the only pianist I have encountered who gives a booklet credit to his own bespoke piano bench.

Rachmaninov's *Chopin Variations*, each one usefully given its own track, set off with a luminously voiced theme played rather too slowly and fussily for my taste, but the performance soon takes off with Osokins revelling in a work that is a vade mecum of Rachmaninov's writing – nostalgia (Var 7), virtuosity (Var 9 might have come straight out of the Third Concerto) and heartbreakingly lyrical (Var 17). The pianist, like Daniil Trifonov, omits Var 18 and decides to end the work by repeating the opening theme at an even more flaccid *largo* than that with which he began, rather than with the defiant *presto* coda or the quiet alternative offered by the composer. This addition is not in the score. Rachmaninov was quite capable of adding a *Goldberg Variation* bookend had he wanted to. Moreover, the booklet writer has no business describing Nikolai Lugansky's choice of playing what Rachmaninov wrote as 'going for crass and crash'. Doubtless, others will show more forbearance than me over these matters and, to be fair, these, the mildly distracting pedal noise and the pianist's intakes of breath are the only factors that detract from a powerful and cleanly articulated reading.

The remaining items on the disc are eight short transcriptions that provide further evidence of Osokins's stylistic identification with Rachmaninov's idiom. They include the later of the two versions of 'Mélodie', Op 3 No 3, the Barcarolle,

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Polyphony
Roomful of Teeth
The Tallis Scholars

ORCHESTRAL & CHORAL ENSEMBLES

Bach Collegium Japan
Tafelmusik
Vox Luminis

CONTEMPORARY

Bang on a Can
Eighth Blackbird

COMPOSER

Henning Kraggerud
Olli Mustonen
(IN ASSOC. WITH SCHOTT MUSIC)
Owain Park
(IN ASSOC. WITH NOVELLO)

ACCOMPANISTS

Sholto Kynoch
Anna Tilbrook

STAGE DIRECTORS

John Copley
Sophie Daneman

SOPRANO

Marie Arnet
Claire Booth
Sinéad Campbell-Wallace
Stephanie Corley
Sophie Daneman
Judith Howarth
Ellie Laugharne
Elizabeth Llewellyn
Joanne Lunn

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Jurgita Adamonytė
Rebecca Afonwy-Jones
Anne Mason
Paula Murrihy
Anne-Marie Owens
Natalie Pérez
Madeleine Shaw
Anna Stéphany
Kitty Whately
Louise Winter

CONTRALTO

Jess Dandy

COUNTER-TENOR

Alexander Chance

TENOR

Charles Daniels
Ryland Davies
James Gilchrist
Peter Hoare
Mark Le Brocq
Daniel Norman
Joshua Owen Mills
Caspar Singh
Adrian Thompson
Lawrence Wiliford

BARITONE

William Dazeley
David Kempster

BASS-BARITONE

Simon Bailey
Edward Grint
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Tristan Hambleton

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Op 10 No 3 as recorded (but not written) by Rachmaninov, and the Op *posth* Fragments. There is one track you should avoid and that is the unutterably vulgar traduction of 'Vocalise', culminating in a brutish and clattery cadenza unworthy of even the most 'exceptional and unpredictable' pianist, as his biography has it. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Schubert

Piano Sonata No 21, D960.
Impromptus, D935 - No 2; No 3

Stefan Stroissnig *pf*

Paladino  PMR0102 (62' • DDD)



Stefan Stroissnig, who studied in his native Vienna and at the Royal College of Music, now teaches at the University for Music and the Performing Arts in Graz. For this solo recording, he has chosen late works by his fellow Viennese, Franz Schubert.

Stroissnig's deliberate, foursquare approach to the opening *Molto moderato* of D960 precludes neither rather significant fluctuations of tempo nor occasional disregard of Schubert's dynamic indications. Certain details, such as the length and volume of the famous bass trills, seem inconsistent. The *Andante sostenuto* is construed as an *adagio*, leaving the impression of growing ever broader as the movement proceeds. The cheerful Scherzo rattles along at a crisp pace, though one might wish for greater dynamic contrasts. In the finale, greater variety of touch and shading of sound would no doubt enhance the charm and effectiveness of the musical discourse.

The second and third Impromptus of D935 round out the disc. In my review copy, some distortion of the sound reproduction occasionally marred louder passages of the piano's upper registers.

Patrick Rucker

Jean Doyen



Chabrier Bourrée fantasque. **España** (arr Chevillard) **Chopin** Four Ballades. Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano', Op 2. Waltzes - No 6, 'Minute', Op 64 No 1; No 11, Op 70 No 1 **Debussy** Images - Book 1; Book 2 - No 3, Poissons d'or **Fauré** Barcarolle No 2, Op 41. Nocturne No 6, Op 63 **Liszt** Trois Études de concert, S144. Zwei Konzertetüden, S145 **Ravel** Gaspard de la nuit **Saint-Saëns** Valse-caprice, 'Wedding Cake', Op 76

Jean Doyen *pf*

APR  APR6030 (146' • ADD)
Recorded 1930-43



My sadly seldom-visited LP collection includes Jean Doyen's *Gaspard* and *Valses nobles*, which have always held a special place in my affections. I think I must have bought it following a friend's tip-off; or was it a *Gramophone* review? I hadn't dreamed that he had been the first ever to record *Gaspard* – in 1937, and reissued here for the first time on CD (no sign of a date anywhere on my LP, but it is clearly not the same performance). I'm sure plenty of listeners will be startled at how technically clean and polished his account of this notoriously finger-breaking piece is. Unsurprisingly the sound is monochrome by modern standards, but that may be as much to do with the instrument used; and once you're attuned to Doyen's unflamboyant but super-agile manner, you may find this more satisfying than many a more exhibitionist modern account.

Doyen's playing embodies the very best in the French pianistic tradition. It is fastidious in taste, cleanly articulated (at times amazingly so), unflashy, favouring subtlety and pose, allergic to barnstorming, and all delivered with a discreet minimum of sustaining pedal: playing to be shared with connoisseurs in a modest-size hall, perhaps, rather than for bringing a large house down. The lyrical pages of all four Chopin Ballades show how winning his modest sensibility can be, though his little compromises in the codas of the Second and Fourth may disappoint those expecting him to take every virtuoso demand in his stride. Thanks to the Chopin Variations placed first on the first disc, the ear is already acclimatised by this stage to the sound, which retains a good deal of 78rpm swish and has presumably not been put through any obtrusive noise-reduction system.

Like so many of the French school he typifies, Doyen was evidently something of a specialist in burbling textures: witness Saint-Saëns's *Valse-caprice* piano quintet, the Fauré Barcarolles and – super-delectably – both Liszt *Concert Studies*. He is wonderful, too, in the two Chabrier pieces. I shall also be returning regularly to the two Chopin waltzes, especially to the G flat major, which is the quintessence of Gallic elegance. But then so too is the exquisite flexibility he brings to the Debussy *Images*.

Three authoritative essays grace APR's booklet yet still leave me hungry for more information. Did Doyen have any direct

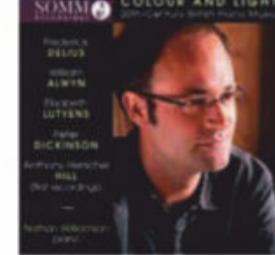
contact with Ravel (he apparently did meet Chevillard, transcriber of Chabrier's *España*)? Did he really record only one of the second book of *Images*, or are the others lost or substandard? Apart from the Ravel (on an Érard) and Liszt (a Gaveau), does anyone know which pianos he used for the other pieces? Are there recordings of the numerous other French works he premiered? But, above all, how many more jewels can APR possibly unearth for its already starry French Piano School crown?

David Fanning

'Colour and Light'

Alwyn Twelve Preludes **Delius** Margot la Rouge (arr Ravel). Nocturne (arr Threlfall) **Dickinson** Paraphrase II **AH Hill** Litany. Toccata **Lutyens** The Ring of Bone **Nathan Williamson** *pf*

Somm Céleste  SOMMCD0196 (78' • DDD)



The eclecticism and stylistic contrasts characterising the works on Nathan

Williamson's newest release reveal this pianist's knack for conceiving intelligent and freshly minted playlists of relatively unfamiliar yet worthy repertoire. Indeed, the contents and running order would make for a most satisfying and stimulating recital programme, with or without intermission.

Although William Alwyn's Twelve Preludes from 1958 restrict each piece to a finite number of pitches, the composer's imagination seems unencumbered by his self-imposed parameters. Williamson's interpretation is comparable to John Ogdon's memorable composer-supervised recording (Chandos, 11/85), and more conscientious in regard to articulation and dynamics. Yet, at times, Ogdon's more flexible approach yields sexier dividends. In contrast to Williamson's relatively straitlaced and literal way with Prelude No 10, Ogdon coyly toys with the pulse and projects the left-hand writing in curvier light. While Williamson rightly emphasises No 4's motoric, quasi-Prokofievian force, Ogdon finds colourful contrasts, abetted by his more generous pedalling.

In his booklet notes, Peter Dickinson succinctly outlines the structural rigour governing his 1967 *Paraphrase II*, a loosely knit theme and variation set. Yet there's nothing remotely forced about the music's organic flow, from the terse, declamatory theme (Dickinson cites Ives but I infer Copland's cooler head!) to the gorgeously florid polytonal arpeggios that break out



Anna Gourari has compiled an enticing programme of music from Bach to Schnittke

in Var 3. The serious and substantial side of Dickinson's multifaceted creativity deserves equal attention alongside his ingenuous pastiche-type compositions, and Williamson's scrupulous pianism arguably surpasses the composer's own extremely capable 1975 performance (Naxos, 2/12).

One must concentrate to fully absorb the protracted time-scale and slowly meted-out contrasts between static and petulant gestures throughout Elisabeth Lutyens's 1975 *The Ring of Bone*. Williamson intones Lutyens's spoken text in a deep and understated voice, abetted by his intense and incisive reading of the piano part. Personally, I prefer Helen Noonan's vocal presence gracing Arabella Teniswood-Harvey's recording on the Australian Move label, even though it may be hard to source.

I don't necessarily share Williamson's view that Anthony Herschel Hill is 'perhaps most striking of all [this disc's] composers ... for displaying such an individual compositional voice', but his *Litany* and *Toccata* effectively toe the 19th-century composer/pianist party line in 21st-century garb. And the two Delius transcriptions are textbook examples of

how to make unpianistic music pianistic. In all, a stimulating and sometimes provocative release. **Jed Distler**

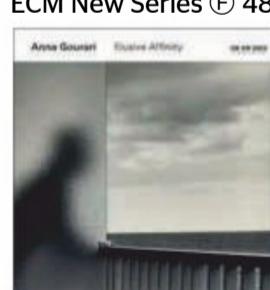
'Elusive Affinity'

JS Bach Keyboard Concertos: BWV974 (after A Marcello) - Adagio; BWV975 (after Vivaldi) - Adagio **Kancheli** Piano Pieces - No 15; No 23

Pärt Variations for the Healing of Arinushka **Rihm** Zwiesprache **Schnittke** Five Aphorisms **Shchedrin** Diary

Anna Gourari pf

ECM New Series F 481 8131 (63' • DDD)



For her third ECM release, Anna Gourari has assembled a thoughtful miscellany whose affinity is not so much elusive as susceptible to change between works and across the recital overall. Most substantial are three sets of pieces from around the turn of this century.

Five Aphorisms (1990) find Alfred Schnittke drawing on that sparse and refracted idiom that came to the fore with the bleak soundscapes from his final decade, in which his polystylistic approach

of allusion and quotation is replaced by an altogether more austere and fragmented means of expression – with the gaunt chorale of the final piece offering the most tenuous of resolutions. Gourari has their measure, as she does that of *Diary* (2002), in which Rodion Shchedrin addresses the 'bagatelle' genre with resourcefulness and no little subtlety, avoiding the tendency to style-hopping often found in his music. Even more unified stylistically is the *Zwiesprache* (1999) of Wolfgang Rihm, though this was no doubt occasioned by the concept underlying these five pieces – each of them an 'in memoriam' to a colleague who died during the year in question, and making for a sequence unified yet also varied in its elegiac manner.

Gourari is a lucid guide to this music, as also the winsome adaptations from theatre and film scores by Giya Kancheli, 'get well' variations by Arvo Pärt that crystallise his re-embrace of tonality, and slow movements from Bach's concertos after Vivaldi and Alessandro Marcello that bookend the recital with unerring pathos. Certainly those who recall Gourari's insinuating presence in Werner Herzog's film *Invincible* should find this latest disc hardly less enticing. **Richard Whitehouse**

David Sawer

This British composer's music is undergoing a shift from a dystopian feel to something fresher, more upbeat, says Arnold Whittall

During a career spanning three decades, David Sawer has made a particularly strong contribution to music for the theatre – both opera and ballet. After *The Panic* – a one-acter written in 1991 for the Royal Opera House's Garden Venture project – and theatre work with various playwrights including Edward Bond, his full-length operatic debut came with *From Morning to Midnight* (English National Opera, 2001). This has been followed by major commissions from Opera North (*Skin Deep*, completed in 2008, premiered 2009) and Garsington Opera (*The Skating Rink*, 2018). None of these has so far been commercially recorded, although the *From Morning to Midnight* Symphonic Suite (2005), on NMC, gives a strong sense of the darkly exuberant musical drama which Sawer derived from the surreal expressionism of Georg Kaiser's 1912 stage play. This ENO opera can easily stand comparison with recent high-profile stage works by Thomas Adès (*The Exterminating Angel*, 2016) and George Benjamin (*Lessons in Love and Violence*, 2017), and like these composers, Sawer occupies the fertile middle ground between the vividly characterised musico-dramatic extremes in current British opera represented by Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Jonathan Dove.

Sawer's music is less sheerly jagged than Birtwistle's but it has its own very potent hallucinatory power

Full-size opera apart, Sawer's openness to a diversity of dramatic genres (perhaps owing something to the spontaneity and musical freethinking of his principal post-university teacher, Kagel) is easily confirmed by a glance at his catalogue of compositions. To begin with, there is *Swansong* (1989), a prize-winning radio feature built around the work of Berlioz, and *Hollywood Extra* (1996), a chamber score to accompany a silent expressionist film from 1928. Then comes the dramatic scena *Flesh and Blood* (2011), a BBC commission, and *The Lighthouse Keepers*, composed and first presented at the Cheltenham Music Festival by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG) in 2013. Sawer has regularly sought out ways of keeping music drama, whether sung or danced, clear of the opera house and – at a mere 30 minutes, scored for two non-singing actors, instrumental nonet and tape – *The Lighthouse Keepers* might best be described as a 'concert drama'. The anarchic spirit of Kagel can possibly be glimpsed behind this adaptation of a full-on melodrama from 1905 associated with the Parisian 'theatre of horror' the Grand Guignol, in an English version by David Harrower. But Sawer's economical and



unapologetically pictorial musical background avoids playing for laughs, proving that an over-the-top horror story whose climactic stages pack in rabies and potential shipwreck can still prove uncannily compelling, given the right musical context.

Sawer may not have taken Kagelesque propensities for exaggerated parody as far as Gerald Barry does in his highly diverting opera *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2010); but a feeling for farce as perilous rather than merely amusing brought a special edge to the musical atmosphere of his earlier compositions, and most powerfully to *Cat's-Eye* (1986), a 25-minute score for instrumental octet (two clarinets, trumpet, trombone, harp, piano, viola, cello), which will shortly appear on a new NMC CD. Choreographed by Richard Alston for Ballet Rambert in 1992, *Cat's-Eye* has nothing to do with the safety device used in road markings; as Sawer explains, the cat's eye was a device found in a projector called the fantoscope, first used in Paris in 1798, which 'brought the optical tricks of the magic lanterns to their most spectacular', shocking audiences 'with fantastic images of spirits and demons'. Sawer's score delivers a wealth of splintering and shivering textures, and his later compositions have continued to relish *Cat's-Eye*'s surreal mechanisms.

Another vividly characterised instance is *Tiroirs* (1996) for large ensemble (played by BCMG on the third disc opposite), where Sawer gives full rein to his liking for what he terms the 'magical and monstrous' materials of surrealist art, and for a form whose interlocking episodes 'open up in the manner

SAWER FACTS

Born Stockport, England, September 14, 1961
Studies University of York (1979-83); with Mauricio Kagel in Cologne (1984-85)
Awards and appointments Sony Award (1990) for *Swansong*; Fulbright-Chester-Schirmer Fellowship (1992); Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award (1993); Arts Foundation Fellowship (1995); composer-in-association, Bournemouth SO (1996); *From Morning to Midnight* (2001) nominated for 2002 Laurence Olivier Award, Outstanding Achievement in Opera; British Academy British Composer Award 2003 for Piano Concerto (2002); Civitella Ranieri Fellowship (2006); Professor of Composition, Royal Academy of Music, London, from 2008; MacDowell Colony Fellowship (2016)

voice to be reckoned with. Sawer's pictorial cue was a 1914 painting of the same name by Giorgio de Chirico, and his aim of the piece was 'to evoke the instability that you would feel could you walk around the strange architecture of its buildings, with their menacing shadows and irrational perspectives'. Sawer's representation of menace and the irrational is vivid in the extreme, especially when tension mounts, as if the walker is momentarily rooted to the spot with indecision within the nightmarish world they inhabit. But at the same time Sawer sought out ways of making the music flow more easily, in the interests of a balanced design that holds the promise of more extended single-movement structures. That promise was handsomely fulfilled in *Byrnan Wood*, commissioned for the BBC Proms in 1992, and recorded for NMC by the BBC SO under Sir Andrew Davis three years later.

Byrnan Wood was, as Sawer has explained, 'one of the original Shakespearean spellings' of *Macbeth*'s Birnam Wood. At first the music seems less concerned with the specific features of an imaginary landscape than with the epic stress and strain of violent military action; and there is a degree of affinity with the kind of ritualised processions that Birtwistle projected in *Earth Dances* (1986), processions echoed in the forceful journeyings central to his opera *Gawain* (1991), in whose premiere run Sawer performed as one of the silent onstage actors, the knight Bedevere. Sawer's music is less sheerly jagged than Birtwistle's, less prone to tumultuous fragmentation, but it has its own very potent hallucinatory power. Given Sawer's avowed interest in the special ability of music to represent motion as change and change as motion, the sense of a compelling process determining the sinister progress of *Byrnan Wood* across its 20-minute length is clear throughout. Most powerful of all, perhaps, is the change at midpoint from violent aggression to eerily restrained lament, a quality that also helps to determine the character of the work's not-entirely-tragic, hauntingly non-violent ending.

How better to cast aside the shadowy imaginings of death and tragedy than in the 1997 work *The Greatest Happiness Principle*!

of a Russian doll'. More recent works exploring similarly rich imagery include *Rumpelstiltskin* (2009), a 70-minute score for 13 instruments and six dancers which Sawer sees as more like a silent film than a conventional ballet – a 25-minute *Rumpelstiltskin* Suite (2011) is soon to be issued on CD. More recent still is *Coachman Chronos* (2014) for instrumental nonet, specially commissioned for the Objects at an Exhibition project at the Science Museum in London (recorded on NMC D215).

Like his near contemporary Simon Holt, Sawer has always responded strongly to visual as well as verbal imagery, and the 12-minute piano piece *The Melancholy of Departure* (1990) gave record-buyers their first indication of a new musical

Another BBC commission, this 12-minute orchestral score was 'inspired by the utopian ideas of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham', and Sawer's first orchestral piece after living in the USA for a year. At the time, the composer wrote of his hope that the work echoed 'some of the freshness and openness' he encountered when visiting that country for the first time. Like his near contemporary Mark-Anthony Turnage, Sawer has increasingly recognised the dramatic potential of surging rhythmic repetition, not as laying down a framework for minimalist incantations but to project a musical life force less conflicted, less potentially dystopian than can be heard in *Byrnan Wood*. A high point in this evolution towards a more expansive, lyrical expressiveness was *April\March* (2016), a 22-minute ballet score commissioned by the RPS and the BBC, given its concert premiere at the 2016 Proms, and its dance premiere (as *Blue Moon*, with choreography by Aletta Collins) by the Royal Ballet this February.

The teasing back-to-front title stems from *A Survey of the Works of Herbert Quain* (1941), a short story (originally in Spanish) by Jorge Luis Borges. Among the fictitious Quain's works is *April March*, a novel described by Borges as 'a kind of game' in which it is the juxtaposition of its various sections 'that makes them effective'. Borges is all about playfulness, the special ambiguity when 'before' and 'after' change places, and Sawer's musical game responds to the multilayered form-plans for the *April March* story which are included in Borges's text. In this recent ballet score, as in the 2018 opera *The Skating Rink*, Sawer sustains his special understanding of that 'freshness and openness' whose upbeat utopian potential has been so productively prominent in his more recent work. Record buyers will be able to judge for themselves when a new NMC Sawer CD from BCMG and Martyn Brabbins, to include *Cat's-Eye* and the *Rumpelstiltskin* Suite, as well as *April\March*, becomes available at the end of September. ⑥

SAWER ON CD

Representing a broad range of his instrumental music

**The Melancholy of Departure**

Rolf Hind pf

NMC

This short but highly evocative piano piece

(coupled with Vic Hoyland's *The Other Side of the Air*) is performed with exceptional clarity and concentration by contemporary music specialist Rolf Hind.

**Byrnan Wood**

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Andrew Davis

NMC (2/96)

Sinister and menacing, the 'moving forest' of military might that secured the downfall of

Shakespeare's Macbeth is brought to abrasive life in the sharply focused orchestral colours of Sawer's tone poem, rendered with maximum conviction by the orchestra that first performed it.

**'From Morning to Midnight Symphonic Suite'**

Simon Blendis, Alexandra Wood vns BCMG /

Susanna Mälkki, Martyn Brabbins; BBCSO / Brabbins

NMC (4/07)

Sawer skilfully encapsulates the wide dramatic range of his opera *From Morning to Midnight* in this half-hour orchestral suite. With another orchestral work, *The Greatest Happiness Principle*, and a characterful pair of chamber pieces, this disc provides a good cross-section of his purely instrumental output.

Vocal



Richard Wigmore on a double dose of Vivaldi from Delphine Galou: 'It's easy to take the Red Priest for granted, yet even Vivaldi-sceptics might be struck by this music's expressive power' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 100**



Alexandra Coghlann hears a mixed recital from Magdalen, Oxford: 'Magdalen's sound has always had an unmannered, forthright quality, and there's real generosity from these singers' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**

JS Bach

'Stay, ye angels'
Cantatas - No 19, *Es erhub sich ein Streit*; No 149,
Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg; No 158, *Der
Friede sei mit Dir*; No 169, *Gott soll allein mein
Herze haben*
Lenneke Ruiten sop **Anke Vondung** contr
Benedikt Kristjánsson ten **Peter Harvey** bass
David Franke org **Gaechinger Cantorey** /
Hans-Christoph Rademann
Accentus F ACC30466 (74' • DDD)
Recorded live at the Stadtkirche Sankt Wenzel,
Naumburg, Germany, September 2018



Recorded live in the church of St Wenceslas in Naumburg, this assortment of four cantatas features its magnificent historic organ built by Zacharias Hildebrandt and tested by Bach in 1746. Two years later Hildebrandt became chief overseer of church organs in Leipzig, where he had already been Bach's harpsichord tuner since the mid-1730s.

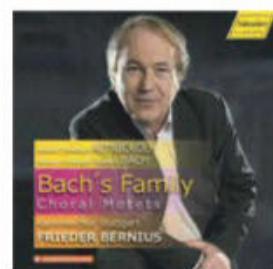
Appropriately for a Michaelmas concert, the first and last cantatas are both for the feast of St Michael the Archangel, whose princely role as the leader of heaven's armies against Lucifer is reflected in Bach's use of three trumpets, timpani and rich woodwind in both No 19, *Es erhub sich ein Streit* (1726), and No 149, *Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg* (1728/29). The orchestra and choir of Gaechinger Cantorey are conducted expertly by Hans-Christoph Rademann; ebullient trumpet-laden choruses fizz with a compound of sonorous muscle, rhythmic flair and contrapuntal transparency, nowhere more so than the convivial opening chorus of No 149 (parodied from the *Hunt* Cantata). The centrepiece of No 19 is the E minor siciliano 'Bleibt, ihr Engel, bleibt bei mir!', sung compassionately by Benedikt Kristjánsson; its harmonically rich string parts are shaped perfectly and its high trumpet chorale tune is played gently by Hans-Martin Rux-Brachtendorf. The

closing chorale is replete with improvised flourishes from the awe-inducing organ between phrases.

The intervening solo cantatas advocate God's peace. The Hildebrandt organ takes centre stage in No 169, *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* (for the 18th Sunday after Trinity, 1726), all three movements probably adapted from a lost keyboard concerto. There is a thrilling synergy between organist David Franke (exploiting the instrument's spectacular registrations) and the alert orchestra (further enriched by two oboes d'amore and taille) in the Sinfonia; the dramatic singing of Anke Vondung conveys dark-hued wisdom. No 158, *Der Friede sei mit Dir* (date unknown), seems to be for either Candlemas or the third day of Easter, and might not be preserved intact; Peter Harvey's solicitous Vox Christi in the first recitative leads into an articulate dialogue aria with Nadja Zwiener's concertante violin ('Welt, ade, ich bin dein müde'). There are an excellent essay by Holger Schneider of Stuttgart's International Bach Academy and eye-catching illustrations, but no sung texts or translations. **David Vickers**

JCF Bach • Altnickol

'Bach's Family - Choral Motets'
Altnickol Befiehl du deine Wege. Nun danket alle Gott, BWV Anh164 **JCF Bach** Ich lieg und schlafe ganz mit Frieden. Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme
Stuttgart Chamber Choir / **Frieder Bernius** with **Sonntraud Engels-Benz** org
Hänssler Classic F HC18014 (56' • DDD • T)



The setting of *Nun danket alle Gott* by Altnickol was once erroneously ascribed to his father-in-law: thus accorded a place in the BWV appendix, it has surely attracted more recordings – at least three before this one – than its relatively undistinguished merits would otherwise deserve. In six minutes of lively

counterpoint the copyist shows himself an assiduous imitator, one too schooled in his master's ways to commit any solecism that would have offended Bach, save in want of his own imagination's exercise.

Emerging with more confidence from its model of *Jesu meine Freude*, the 12-verse *Befiehl du deine Wege* makes play with genre types such as chorale settings, 'straight' and elaborate, chromatic fugue (verse 2) and, more originally, a kind of concerted drama shaking a Lutheran fist at devilish stratagems.

Johann Sebastian's motet-writing also supplied his son Johann Christoph Friedrich – 'the Bückeburg Bach' – with a template for his treatment of the 'Wachet auf' chorale, as much in terms of virtuoso vocal-consort techniques as structure. The chorale theme weaves its way through all three movements including a delightfully sprung central panel ('Zion hört'), which Frieder Bernius effectively assigns to a quartet of soloists drawn from the ranks of his Kammerchor Stuttgart.

Reduced to forces of 7.7.5.5, Bernius's ensemble lives up to its own standards of excellence with splendidly fresh and vivid singing that makes its rivals on record sound tentative or unwieldy by comparison. The choir is backed by a discreet organ continuo rather than the more obtrusive (if historically plausible) string-band accompaniment for an all-Altnickol album from the Norddeutscher Figuralchor on Carus (for whom Bernius makes most of his records).

That said, a Capriccio recording of Bach family motets from 2010 shouldn't be overlooked by those hankering after all-male voices in this repertoire. Under their equally longstanding and underrated director Gerhard Schmidt-Gaden, the Tölz Boys' Choir bring more unaffected polish to both Altnickol's *Befiehl du deine Wege* and the most poignantly affective work on either album, *Ich lieg und schlafe* by JCF Bach. Less radical or unpredictable than anything by his brother CPE, the arpeggiated melodies and moulded suspensions of this funeral motet from 1780 nevertheless demonstrate



Ebullient fizz: the orchestra and choir of Gaechinger Cantorey, directed by Hans-Christoph Rademann, bring flair and compassion to Bach cantatas

how even an unstoried member of the family could move with the times: English readers with choral backgrounds may come away with SS Wesley's *Blessed be the God and Father*, from 1853, echoing gently in the mind's ear. **Peter Quantrill**

Beethoven

Christus am Ölberge, Op 85^a.

Elegischer Gesang, Op 118

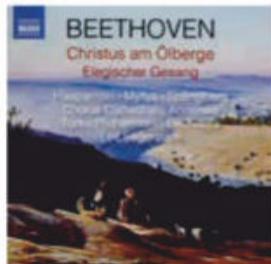
^aHanna-Leena Haapamäki sop ^aJussi Myllys ten

^aNiklas Spångberg bass Chorus Cathedralis

Aboensis; Turku Philharmonic Orchestra /

Leif Segerstam

Naxos ® 8 573852 (64' • DDD • T/t)



Leif Segerstam has become notorious in recent years for giving performances of standard repertoire that rival Celibidache in their pseudo-mystical slowness if not their refinement. So it comes as a surprise, and a pleasant one, to find him directing Beethoven with the spirit, the energy and the fine sensibility that distinguished his Sibelius series on Ondine and brings convincingly to life Beethoven's unfulfilled ambition for *Christ on the Mount of Olives* as a new kind of sacred opera.

Very much against Beethoven's wishes, the publisher removed stage directions from the score, which was published a couple of years after its hasty composition over barely more than a month early in 1803. Yet the idea that, at the conclusion of his first aria, Christ would fall to his knees is most vividly conveyed both by Jussi Myllys and Segerstam's pointed attention to the faltering accompaniment.

In the demanding title-role, Myllys suffers little by comparison with Plácido Domingo (with Kent Nagano), who took on the role at the opposite end of his career. His baritonal reach brings grit and authority to those recitative pages of less compelling invention while a sense of slight strain in the arias fits the part as well as Florestan – and Segerstam doesn't miss a trick when it comes to Beethoven's defiantly personal fusion of politics, religion and music, underlining even more than Nagano how and where the oratorio anticipates key moments in the *Eroica*, from later the same year, and then *Fidelio* and *Egmont*.

Where Segerstam does expand to telling effect is the central duet for Christ and the Seraph, sung by Hanna-Leena Haapamäki with appealingly youthful and pure tone and assured coloratura. The orchestral and choral contributions

are less polished – the tenors in particular have a rough time of it – but Segerstam keeps up the dramatic tension even through some rocky passages in the obligatory concluding fugal chorus. The *Elegischer Gesang* suffers from similar signs of haste or inattention: played and sung with all the inner feeling of a late-quartet slow movement, but also with too many spots of unreliable intonation and ensemble to make for an entirely consoling experience.

Peter Quantrill

Selected comparison:

Nagano (1/04®) (HARM) HMG50 1802

Finzi · Bednall

Bednall *Nunc dimittis* **Finzi** All this night, Op 33.

Three Anthems, Op 27. *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*, Op 26. *Magnificat*, Op 36. Seven Poems of Robert Bridges, Op 17. *White-flowering days*, Op 37

The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge;

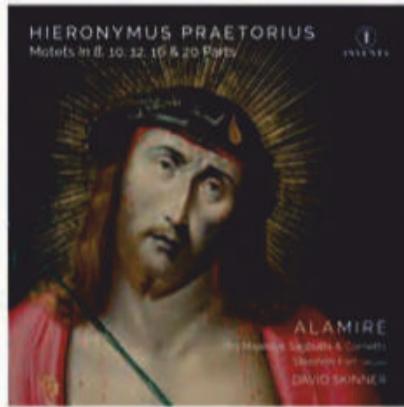
Trinity Brass / Stephen Layton with

Alexander Hamilton, Asher Oliver org

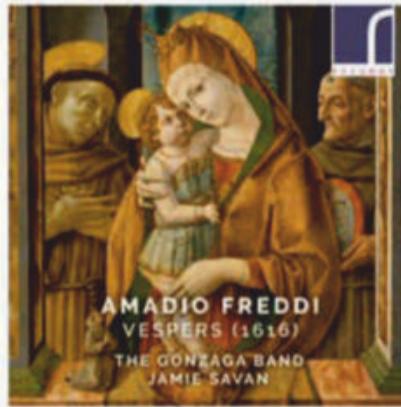
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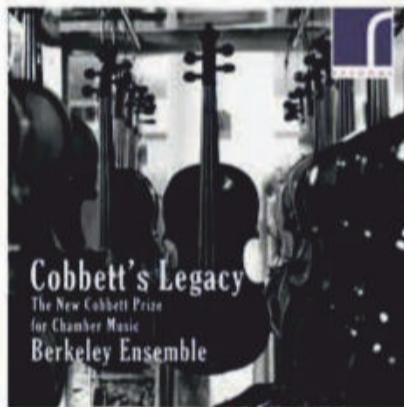
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The Gonzaga Band;
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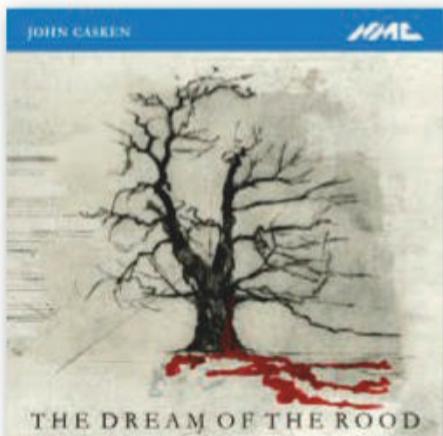
La Gracieuse: Pièces de Viole by Marin Marais
Robert Smith (viola da gamba);
Israel Golani; Joshua Cheatham; Olivier Fortin

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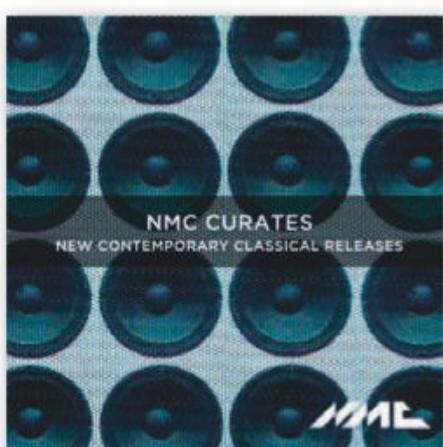
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GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Stephen Layton

The conductor reflects on his lifelong love of the choral music of Gerald Finzi, and its enduring power to move performers and listeners

What first drew you to Finzi's music?

It started when I was a child. Ascension Day 1977: the sound of the tuba stop on the organ is heard and within 15 seconds every chorister is giving every last ounce of energy, almost shouting, 'God is gone up'. Earlier that day, we had already excitedly climbed to the top of the cathedral tower to sing Stanford's *Coelos ascendit*, but it was this piece of Finzi that I and my fellow choirboys were really on fire for. What an extraordinarily life-giving and energising time that all was. In the mid-1970s, Martin Neary directed us choristers in the first performances of Tavener and Harvey (*I love the Lord, Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*), some of the first 'baroque' Bach Passions with the Academy of Ancient Music, Bruckner's E minor Mass, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. And yes, in the same elevated list, the music of Gerald Finzi, who later, while a Cambridge student, I heard rather disdainfully referred to by a faculty member as a composer who was part of the 'English cowpat school much celebrated in Lyritaland'. (Lyrita being the pioneering recording label that issued this sort of music.)

Your programme closes with *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*. Do you see this as the culmination of Finzi's choral writing?

Yes, I think this is the finest of all Finzi's choral settings. It has a complex organ part which I learned to play for a special service in King's College Chapel. In 1988 the choirs of King's and St John's Colleges combined in our chapel to sing this anthem under the direction of Dr George Guest. I revelled in his intense passion for this music. George Guest said in rehearsal, in his laconic way: 'It is not any old sacrifice, but one that is both *full* and *final*', bidding everyone to phrase in a manner that was almost beyond the powers of speech in the face of Richard Crashaw's awesome description.

Do you feel there's a timeless quality to Finzi's choral music?

Absolutely. As I return to this music, no longer a carefree choirboy in Winchester Cathedral, or even a slightly more careworn



Cambridge organ scholar, I am thoughtful when I read, 'O dear Memorial of that Death, which lives still and allows us breath'. Crashaw's text and Finzi's music are as one as they conjure up the redemptive power of love. What is it about that final 'Amen' beloved by so many singers? Why does it always seem to bring us to our knees? It glides along with an extraordinary, ethereal beauty, but in the closing seconds has a momentary harmonic question mark - a doubt - but then ultimately it finds its positive musical answer in the final chord, or as Crashaw poetically says, 'Rich Royal food, bountiful bread, whose use denies us to the dead'.

Trinity at their absolute best) but also in its shape and programming. An all-Finzi recital sounds straightforward enough; but in opening with the *Magnificat* and closing with the monumental anthem *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*, Stephen Layton transforms it from a collage into a cycle. We move from birth to death, Incarnation to Crucifixion, from the anticipation of the Annunciation to the fulfilment of the Eucharist.

The composer's secular music is also carefully folded into this sacred narrative. The fragility and brush-away lightness of Finzi's Robert Bridges settings and the part-song 'White-flowering days' come into their own here – portraits of a world already receding into the distance, the Calvary Cross rising up in the foreground.

He may have given us concertos and anthems, cantatas and chamber music but Finzi is, above all, a song composer. Trinity and Layton never let you forget that in performances in which 30 voices

sing as one, where collective statements become private, lyric utterances. There's a lightness to the unisons (a recurring Finzi gesture) and an organic, blossoming quality to the counterpoint that gives these choral works a first-person immediacy. Which makes it all the more startling when the congregation does burst in, reminding us where we are.

You have to hear the filmy, rhapsodic lightness of the Henry Vaughan setting 'Welcome sweet and sacred feast' to really startle at the arresting opening of 'God is gone up' (where the choir are joined by Trinity Brass, led by no less than David Blackadder on trumpet) – a trick Layton plays again by cutting from the brilliance of the lithe, ecstatic 'Wherfore tonight so full of care' into the sober, muttered darkness of *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*.

Finzi's *Magnificat* famously lacks either a *Gloria* or an answering *Nunc dimittis*. Rather than use Holst's familiar setting of the latter, Layton instead gives us

David Bednall's graceful 2016 setting. It's a work with too much of its own voice for straight pastiche, but which is absolutely steeped in Finzi's language – an affectionate, serious musical homage that takes the composer as a jumping-off point for its own lovely invention. Along with the beautiful cover art – an image of Gloucester Cathedral's Finzi Memorial Window – and excellent booklet notes by Francis Pott, it's just another bonus from this outstanding release.

Alexandra Coghlan

Handel

Brockes Passion, HWV48

Ana María Labin, Johannette Zomer sop

David Erler counterten **Rupert Charlesworth,**

Sebastian Kohlhepp tens **Tobias Berndt** bar

NDR Chorus; Göttingen Festival Orchestra /

Laurence Cummings

Accent © (two discs for the price of one) ACC26411 (151' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Stadthalle, Göttingen, May 25, 2017



The Passion
oratorio *Der für
die Sünde der Welt
gemarterte und*

sterbende Jesus is usually nicknamed the *Brockes Passion* after its Pietist author, the Hamburg dilettante Barthold Heinrich Brockes. Its first setting by Keiser (1712) was performed privately in the home of the poet. It is increasingly popular to claim misleadingly that Handel's version was premiered on April 3, 1719, at the refectory of Hamburg's Domkirche; the music was composed in London in about 1716 and sent by post, and it is difficult to believe there was not an earlier performance.

August Wenzinger's pioneering interpretation (1967), a patchy Hungarian account conducted by Nicholas McGegan (1985) and Peter Neumann's excellent Cologne performance (2009) are now joined by this live recording made at the Göttingen Handel Festival in 2017. The opening chorus, sporadic brief chorales and a few concise *turba* utterances are sung with warmly rounded sonorities and precise diction by the NDR Chorus. Laurence Cummings's unerring judgment of tempos, solemn yet dramatic pacing, articulation, shaping and textures are matched with marvellous responsiveness from the festival orchestra – led adroitly by Elizabeth Blumenstock, and with intelligent continuo-playing from cellist Phoebe Carrai, theorist David Tayler and harpsichordist Hanneke van Proosdij. Several arias according prominence to oboes and bassoons are played with technical finesse and expressiveness.

Tobias Berndt's articulate serenity is ideal for Jesus's pronouncements; his solemn pleading with the Father in Gethsemane is accompanied by tautly controlled strings ('Mein Vater'). Johannette Zomer's expressive wisdom and crystal-clear communication of the Daughter of Zion's texts are complemented by profound artistry of discernment about when and how to embellish subtly (for example, 'Brich, mein Herz, zerfliess in Tränen' and 'Die ihr Gottes Gnad' versäumet' – just two of the many numbers that Handel transformed for his first English oratorios *Esther* and *Deborah*). Peter's vehement seizing his sword at Judas's betrayal and Jesus's arrest ('Gift und glut') is captured thrillingly by Rupert Charlesworth, who also conveys heartbroken penitence after Peter has thrice denied knowing Jesus ('Schau, ich fall' in strenger Busse'). Judas's guilt-

racked suicide is depicted with sensitivity albeit slightly uneven intonation by David Erler. The Evangelist's simple recitatives are narrated eloquently by Sebastian Kohlhepp. The live warts-and-all recording does not flatter Ana Maria Labin's relatively pinched singing as the principal Believing Soul, although her steelier timbre is a suitable counterfoil to Zomer. Most soloists reappear as verbose faithful souls whose numerous contemplations stifle the libretto's cumbersome pacing in Part 2 – although every one of Handel's individual short numbers is a gem, routinely performed here with bittersweet fluency. **David Vickers**

Comparative versions:

Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Wenzinger

(4/68⁸) (ARCH) ▶ 463 644-2GOR3

Capella Savaria, McGegan

(12/86⁸) (HUNG) ▶ HCD12734/6

Collegium Cartusianum, P Neumann

(5/10) (CARU) CARUS83 428

Johannes de Lymburgia

Gaude felix Padua'

Agnus Dei. Christe redemptor omnium.

Descendi in ortum meum. Gaude felix Padua.

Kyrie eleison. Kyrie Qui de stirpe regia. Magne dies leticie. Magnificat. Recordare frater pie.

Recordare, virgo mater. Salve virgo regia.

Sanctus admirabilis splendor. Tota pulcra es.

Virginis proles

Le Miroir de Musique / Baptiste Romain

Ricercar Ⓛ RIC402 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Johannes de Lymburgia was active in the Veneto around 1430, though presumably born in the Low Countries. His music is known almost exclusively from a single manuscript now in Bologna (the famous Q15), which contains no fewer than 46 works credited to him, making him the second most represented composer in the manuscript (the first being the great Dufay). Despite that, he is almost totally ignored. As far as I can see only about three of his works are available on record. So this CD devoted entirely to his music is more than to be welcomed: it is a major breakthrough in the availability of early 15th-century music in the catalogue.

His music is all in devotional Latin and presumably all liturgical, and it must be said that it hardly makes for the most enthralling listening: he was by no means Dufay. But Baptiste Romain and Le Miroir de Musique make the best possible case of the music, with flawless performances

throughout, most particularly introducing a new name to the catalogue of medieval music, that of the soprano Jessica Jans, who carries much of the main melodic material with magical clarity and expressive singing.

On the other hand, one could have questions about the ensemble choices here. Even if we accept the historically unlikely mixing of male and female voices in liturgical polyphony, we may have a harder time accepting vielles taking part in such music much before 1470, as already pointed out by Peter Holman more than 30 years ago. That may not matter, except that the constant instrumental participation can result in somewhat breathless tempos. But, as I said, we should be massively grateful that this CD exists at all.

David Fallows

Josquin Desprez

'Adieu mes amours'

Busnois/Josquin Fortuna desperata Dall'Aquila

Ricercar Josquin Desprez Adieu mes amours.

Ave Maria. La Bernardina. Douleur me bat.

Ile fantazies de Joskin. Mille regretz (attrib).

Nymphes napées. Nymphes des bois. La plus

des plus. Quant de vous seul. Regretz sans fin

Narváez La canción del emperador Josquin/

Gerle En l'ombre d'ung buissonnet

Dulces Exuviae

Ricercar Ⓛ RIC403 (63' • DDD • T/t)



Singing self-accompanied on the lute was considered a mark of the true Renaissance gentleman, but the two functions could be shared out between two performers. By its nature, polyphony privileges the interaction between voices; but nonetheless much Renaissance music (especially secular) relies on a principal melody. That is plainly the case with *Mille regretz*, one of the standout hits of the time; no doubt a fair proportion of the pieces on this recital would have been performed this way. Romain Bockler's brooding voice sustains the entire recital. His willingness to ornament so consistently is to be applauded, though it's not always as spontaneous as one might wish. Bor Zuljan is a sympathetic accompanist, seldom needing to draw attention to himself. Renaissance

aficionados will note his use in some tracks of a 'bray lute', which has been fitted in such a way that the strings are further excited after they have been plucked, making the buzzing sound usually associated with bray harps.



Solemn yet dramatic: Laurence Cummings directs Handel's Brockes Passion at the 2017 Göttingen Handel Festival

I would recommend this disc unreservedly, not least for the window it opens on to the variety of performance contexts for written polyphony in the Renaissance (and Bockler's willingness to ornament). Two observations, however: first, the slow speed typical of lute intabulations rubs off on the recital as a whole, which is to say that the odd change of pace wouldn't have gone amiss. Second, one has to point out that Josquin's authorship of several of these pieces is seriously disputed. (I've already mentioned the most famous case, that of *Mille regretz*.) Most bizarre of all, there is not a shred of evidence linking the beautiful *Quant de vous seul* (without a doubt one of the recital's high points) to anyone but Ockeghem. In the run-up to the 500th anniversary of Josquin's death, one hopes that performers and producers will (as they say) do the homework.

Fabrice Fitch

Leifs

Edda II: The Lives of the Gods, Op 42

Hanna Dóra Sturludóttir *mez* Elmar Gilbertsson
ten Kristinn Sigmundsson *bass* Schola Cantorum;
Iceland Symphony Orchestra / Hermann Bäumer
BIS  BIS2420 (65' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



If Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is the glossed-up, 'Hollywood' version of Wotan's shenanigans, this is the urtext. Eleven years on from Herman Bäumer's Reykjavík recording of *Edda I* (2/08) – the first chapter in Jón Leifs's gargantuan oratorio that deals with the creation of the world as told in the 1270 Codex Regius and other sources – here we have *Edda II*, telling of Wotan (OK, Odin), his sons, the goddesses (Frigg, Freyka, Sigyn, etc) and the Valkyries, Norns and Warriors. (*Edda III*, the saga's *Götterdämmerung*, known in the Nordic countries as *Ragnarök*, which recounts the submersion of the world in water and the demise of the gods, was never completed.)

This is Leifs in concept mode, reacting against Wagner's 'terrible misunderstanding of the Nordic character and artistic heritage' by going in the other direction. The first movement, 'Odin', opens with horn calls that could almost be Wagner minus the sheen; but fundamentally the musical language,

like the narrative, is one of recitation. Leifs sweetens little and makes no concessions to comfort for performer or listener. It's part of the thrill, even if the language is both richer and rawer than that in *Edda I*.

The gait and texture change across the six movements but what we hear is hewn from the same rock: short-breathed, angular, riven with modulations and rhythmic displacements, utterly physical, curiously invigorating and wholly primitive (sung, spoken, shouted), even with its passing subtleties. We are listening to the earth here, much as we are in comparable passages from Adès's *America*, of which, uncannily, there are a few. As Guy Rickards observed with reference to the work's predecessor, the texts read like compendiums of information, full of runic repetitions.

In trying to put the work in context, I am reminded of AA Gill's words on barbecuing: 'It is to cuisine what Stonehenge is to architecture – a start.' Vegetarians beware, but there is meat aplenty here, even if some of it is on the raw side. Questions remain over Leifs's return to primitivism, which was undeniably connected to his fascination with medieval Norse literature but can feel

too obviously linked to the fact that the composer was in a hurry to finish the score before he died in 1968. Leifs could be very sophisticated, let's not forget, even if he was consciously trying to avoid metropolitan, European sheen here.

Speaking of which, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra (augmented by plenty of natural percussion) channel the earthiness and edginess that used to be a more central element of its sound before the opening of the Harpa Concert Hall (which the previous instalment pre-dates), while the Schola Cantorum and soloists let you hear what a struggle this constantly angular writing is, but to thrilling effect: they are evocative when singing, speaking, shouting and yodelling. Like a barbecue, you're missing out if you've never experienced this, even if it turns out not to be your particular flagon of mead.

Andrew Mellor

Lully

De profundis, LWF62. Dies irae, LWF64/i.

Te Deum, LWF55

Sophie Junker, Judith van Wanroij soprs Matthias

Vidal, Cyril Auvity countertenors Thibaut Lenaerts

ten Alain Buet bass Namur Chamber Choir;

Millennium Orchestra; Cappella Mediterranea /

Leonardo García Alarcón

Alpha F ALPHAB444 (83' • DDD • T/t)



These three ceremonial *grand motets* were included in Lully's publication of assorted *Motets à deux choeurs de la Chapelle du Roy* (1684) but had been written for different occasions over a number of years. The *Te Deum* was first performed on September 9, 1677, in the chapel at Fontainebleau to celebrate the baptism of the composer's own eldest son – whose godparents were Louis XIV and Queen Marie-Thérèse. Six years later, the *Dies irae* and *De profundis* were both performed at the funeral of Marie-Thérèse at the abbey of Saint-Denis on September 1, 1683, although *De profundis* had already been used as part of the tests for the new *sous-maîtres* of the royal chapel a few months earlier.

Recorded in the chapel at Versailles, these three works are directed by Leonardo García Alarcón with vivacity and bold colours. The Namur Chamber Choir are full-blooded in dynamic illustrations of the Day of Judgement (*Dies irae*), extrovert invocations of praise (*Te Deum*) and contoured emotional contrasts depicting the depths of despair (*De profundis*). The

choir function in tandem with the 'petit choeur' of six assertive soloists – contributions from high tenors Cyril Auvity and Matthias Vidal and bass Alain Buet are particularly eloquent. Double theorbo continuo players often overplay and dominate when accompanying the soloists, and thereby clutter the texture in passages that might have conveyed cathartic serenity. The Millennium Orchestra display crisp swagger, sentimental expressiveness, articulate violins, fruity oboes and bassoons, and splendid trumpets and thudding timpani, as the pieces variously demand.

Notwithstanding momentary over-baked mannerisms, Alarcón's interpretations are a zesty alternative to the finely judged accounts by Le Concert Spirituel and Hervé Niquet. **David Vickers**

Selected comparison:

Niquet (NAXO) 8 554397/8 (oas) or 8 503229

Martinsson

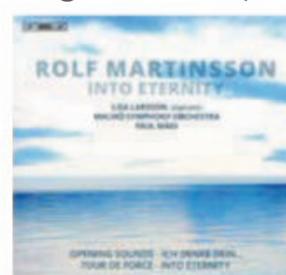
Ich denke Dein ..., Op 100a. Into Eternity, Op 103a.

Opening Sounds, Op 94. Tour de force, Op 95

^aLisa Larsson sop

Malmö Symphony Orchestra / Paul Mägi

BIS F BIS2323 (67' • DDD/DSD)



Unless one happens to be dealing with Wolfgang Rihm, Kaija Saariaho or Steve Reich, it's difficult to suppress the surge of scepticism that swiftly accompanies an opening statement on a CD booklet proclaiming the composer in question to be an 'internationally regarded' leading figure. Rolf Martinsson – who he?

My hastily conducted research yielded very little about him in *Grove Music Online* (or *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, the German-language equivalent). To be fair, the full statement in the booklet notes refers to Martinsson (b1956) as 'one of Sweden's leading composers'. However, one struggles to find anything among the four works presented here that will elevate Martinsson's music beyond national or regional significance.

There is no doubting Martinsson's gift as an orchestrator. His ability to control, combine and blend instrumental colours imaginatively and creatively is evident throughout. The fanfare-like *Opening Sounds*, recalling the composer's earlier concert overture *Open Mind*, springs into action with bold-as-brass trumpets, busy, scurrying strings and more harp glissandos than you'll hear in a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie intro. *Tour de force*, with its

thunderous, percussion-heavy opening, is full of raw power and dramatic presence. Martinsson also has a gift for text-setting, as heard in the intensely expressive *Into Eternity*, which features Lisa Larsson's impressively haunting soprano voice. And the orchestral song-cycle *Ich denke Dein ...* is bound together through the subtle use of thematic interplay and development. Yet, despite flashes of originality, Martinsson's music remains for the most part caught in the musical gestures and clichés not so much of the last *fin de siècle* but of the one that came before it.

One of Martinsson's teachers, Brian Ferneyhough, would surely qualify as an 'internationally leading' figure, yet from the evidence contained on this recording any trace of the English composer's influence vanished a long time ago.

Like many composers of his generation, Martinsson's rite of passage involved first embracing then expunging the spectre of modernism and atonality; but if the net result is a kind of watered-down neo-Romanticism consisting of three parts John Williams outtakes from *Attack of the Clones*, to which has been added one part Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, then give me Ferneyhough any day. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Obrecht

Anonymous Maria zart, von edler Art

Busnois Fortuna desperata Obrecht Missa

Fortuna desperata. Missa Maria zart

Beauty Farm

Fra Bernardo F FB1905157 (94' • DDD • T/t)



The Fra Bernardo label is certainly fulfilling its mission statement to cover 'white spots on the map of early music' with this new release from Beauty Farm. Obrecht is quite under-represented on disc and so this recording of his *Missa Fortuna desperata* and *Missa Maria zart* is much-needed. Less clear is the mission statement of Beauty Farm themselves: their biography claims they were founded out of 'a kind of despair about the break in the interpretation of this music which took place in the 1980s'. I admired the rich tone of this vocal ensemble on their debut disc (11/15) but it didn't then, and doesn't now, strike me as breaking new ground. Nor do they have much in common with the mainly choral accounts of Obrecht pre-1980.

To consider this, let's compare three recordings of *Missa Maria zart*. This hour-long cyclic Mass is one of the biggest of the Renaissance, a surprising feat at odds with



Gustavo Gimeno leads his soloists and the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra in a devotional account of Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle*

Obrecht's modest modern profile. The Prague Madrigal Singers in 1969 (Supraphon, 6/72 – nla), singing pre-'break in interpretation', took a robust approach alternating a chamber choir – complete with consistent/persistent vibrato – with passages of staunch-toned vocal duets. They also employed a feast of instrumental colours on the cantus firmus. The Tallis Scholars in 1992, presumably emblematic of a 'break in tradition', made much lighter work of Obrecht's busy contrapuntal textures. Their smaller ensemble and minimal vibrato created forwards momentum through gracefully phrased arcs, and they subtly embedded the long-notes of the *Maria zart* song in the polyphonic texture. Beauty Farm sit between these two approaches but much closer to The Tallis Scholars: their tone is richer, without persistent vibrato, and with one voice per part they delineate each polyphonic strand through different hues of vowel-sounds and shades of vocal effort. They are more confident in busier passages where they have a nice tone, balance and momentum. Longer, two-voice textures spawn occasional sour tuning ('Qui tollis I' in the *Gloria* in particular) but in general they sing with tenderness and maintain attractively brisker tempos than either other recording.

I admire Beauty Farm's sound and choice of repertoire but their rhetoric

fails to deliver. The only notable reaction to the 1980s early music movement here is inconsistent tuning. **Edward Breen**

Missa Maria zart – selected comparison:

Tallis Scholars, Phillips (3/96) (GIME) CDGIM032

Rossini

Petite Messe solennelle

Eleonora Buratto sop Sara Mingardo mez

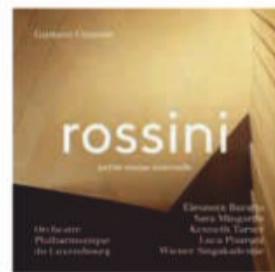
Kenneth Tarver ten Luca Pisaroni bass

Vienna Singakademie; Luxembourg

Philharmonic Orchestra / Gustavo Gimeno

Pentatone P 50186 797

(82' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



The *Petite Messe solennelle* was first performed in Paris in 1864 as a chamber work for 12 singers, two pianos and harmonium, though shortly before his death Rossini also prepared an orchestral version, which was premiered after his death under the title *Messe solennelle* (there is nothing 'petite' about the revised score, though the original title is nowadays used for both editions). Opinions have differed over time about the relative merits of the two; and while many have expressed a preference for the intimacy of the original, it is the altogether loftier, perhaps more

overtly operatic second version that has of late come to assume prominence both in the concert hall and on disc.

Gustavo Gimeno and his Luxembourg orchestra give us a sombre, devotional account, carefully avoiding grand gestures or anything that smacks of overt flamboyance. Gimeno places the emphasis on the prayers and petitions for mercy that form both the work's emotional kernel and its moments of deepest reflection, and the uneasy mood, established in the turbulent opening *Kyrie*, persists to some extent throughout despite the grandeur of much that follows. The playing is superbly accomplished, the orchestral textures clean yet dark, while the choral singing, from the Wiener Singakademie, is exceptional. Counterpoint is crystal-clear, even in the complex fugues that bring both *Gloria* and *Credo* to a close, while the 'Christe eleison' is profoundly affecting in its rapt introversion.

So it's somewhat regrettable that the soloists are less than ideally matched, particularly when placed beside Riccardo Chailly's more consistently cast Bologna recording. Kenneth Tarver sings with his customary elegance but is pushed in his upper registers in 'Domine Deus', while Luca Pisaroni takes time to get into his stride after a tentative start, only really striking form at 'Quoniam tu solus sanctus'.



Gramophone Choice Recordings

Disc of the month

Chopin	Liszt & Music from France (2CD)	Jean Doyen £12.50
Croes	La Sonate Égarée	BarrocoTout £11.50
Debussy	The Young Debussy (DVD)	LSO, Roth £17.00
Finzi	Choral Works	Trinity Cambridge, Layton £10.50
Grieg #	Lyric Pieces + Mendelssohn	Kozhukhin £11.00
Holliger	Zwieggespräche + Kurtág	Wegener, Holliger £12.00
Janáček	Piano Works	Jan Bartoš £11.00
Mahler	Symphony 4	Fomina, LPO, Jurowski £ 8.00
Tchaikovsky	Piano Concerto 1 + Prokofiev	Zhang, Slobodeniouk £11.50
Tchaikovsky	Liturgy of St John Chrysostom etc.	Klava £11.50
	Messes de Barcelone et d'Apt	Vellard £12.00

New Releases for August & September 2019

Brahms	Violin Sonatas	Ibragimova, Tiberghien £10.50
Chopin	Études + Liszt Consolations etc.	Batsashvili £11.00
Debussy	Nocturnes + Duruflé Requiem	Kožená, Ticciati £11.50
Dvořák	Chamber Music for Piano & Strings (4CD)	Busch Trio £32.00
Holst	Planets + Elgar Enigma Variations	Litton £11.50
Janáček	Diary of One Who Disappeared etc.	Přibyl £12.00
Machaut	The Single Rose	The Orlando Consort £10.50
Mozart	Don Giovanni (2DVD)	Álvarez, Montanari £32.00
Pfitzner	+ Braunfels Piano Concertos	Becker, Trinks £10.50
Schubert	Winterreise	Ian Bostridge, Adès £11.00
Stanford	A Song of Agincourt etc.	Ulster Orchestra, Shelley £10.50
Tchaikovsky	The Tchaikovsky Project (7CD)	Bychkov £28.50
Vaughan Williams	The Song of Love	Whately, R. Williams £12.00
Williams J	Across the Stars	Mutter, Williams £11.00

Pentatone Promotion

Bartók	Concerto for Orchestra etc.	Kubelík, Ozawa £ 9.50
Brahms	Symphony 4, Hungarian Dances	Janowski £11.00
Dvořák	Symphony 7 etc.	Kreizberg £11.00
Hindemith	+ Britten Violin Concertos	Steinbacher, Jurowski £11.00
Liszt	The 2 Piano Concertos	Arghamanyan £11.00
Lutosławski	+ Dutilleux Cello Concertos	Moser, Søndergård £11.00
Martinů	Double Concerto for Violin & Piano	Kodama, Foster £11.00
Mendelssohn	+ Tchaikovsky Violin Concertos	Steinbacher £11.00
Mozart	Symphonies 40 & 41	Manze £11.00
Schubert	Heimweh - Lieder	Anna Lucia Richter £11.00
Verdi	+ Donizetti Opera Arias	Fabiano, Mazzola £11.00
Wagner	Overtures, Preludes (2SACD)	Janowski £16.00

Hyperion Promotion

Bach	Magnificats	Arcangelo, Cohen £10.50
Bairstow	Harris + Stanford Choral Works	O'Donnell £10.50
Beethoven	Piano Sonatas 30 - 32	Steven Osborne £10.50
Cramer	Piano Concertos 4 & 5	Shelley £10.50
Elgar	Caractacus	Brabbins £10.50
Haydn	String Quartets Op.64 (2CD)	London Haydn Quartet £10.50
Mendelssohn	Piano Trios	The Florestan Trio £10.50
Parry	Piano Trios 1 & 3	Leonore Piano Trio £10.50
Sibelius	Kullervo	Appl, Juntunen, Dausgaard £10.50
Stravinsky	Rite of Spring	Hamelin, Andsnes £10.50
Tavener	Angels etc.	Winchester Cathedral, Lumsden £10.50
Tippett	Symphonies 1 & 2	BBC SSO, Brabbins £10.50
Vierne	+ Franck Violin Sonatas	Ibragimova £10.50
Ysaÿe	Six Sonatas for Solo Violin	Ibragimova £10.50

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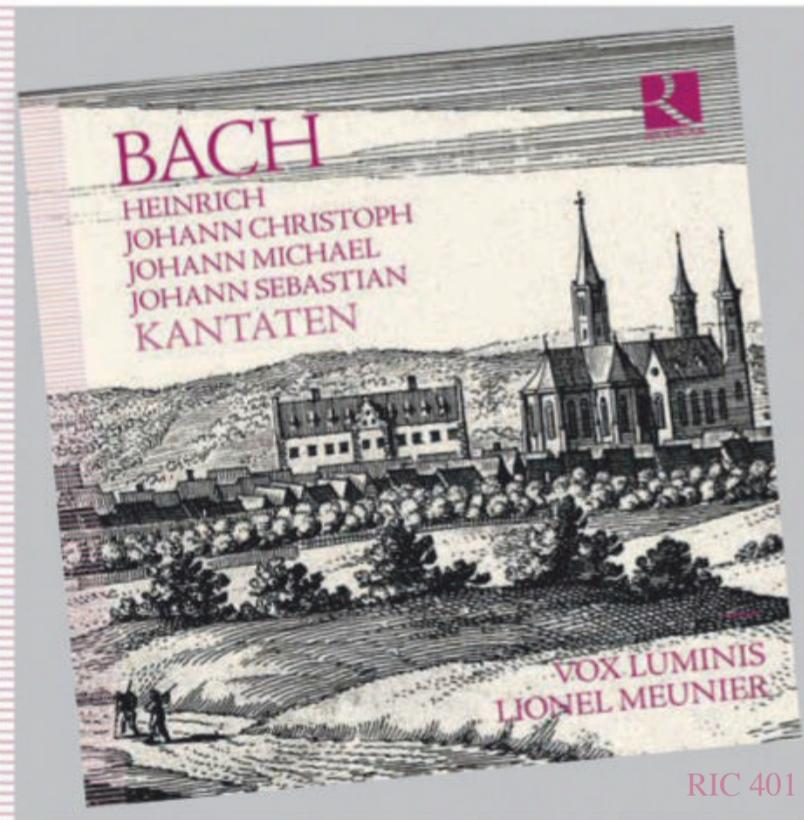
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BACH



HEINRICH
JOHANN CHRISTOPH
JOHANN MICHAEL
JOHANN SEBASTIAN
KANTATEN

VOX LUMINIS
LIONEL MEUNIER



Having recorded the complete motets composed by the ancestors of Johann Sebastian Bach, Vox Luminis now tackles their complete spiritual concerts and sacred cantatas, in which the instruments – particularly the strings – play a highly important role. To round off this programme, Vox Luminis presents the cantata 'Christ lag in Todesbanden' by Johann Sebastian Bach, in its original version dating from his Arnstadt period, containing copious elements linking it to the music of his forebears.



Also available: RIC 347

outhere
MUSIC

Distributed in the UK by RSK Entertainment
and in the US by Naxos of America Inc.

The women fare better. Eleonora Buratto sounds good in the almost bluesy 'Crucifixus' (the comparison with jazz has been more than once drawn) and her voice blends exquisitely with Sara Mingardo's dark alto in the deeply felt 'Qui tollis', which is very much the emotional fulcrum around which Gimeno's interpretation swings. Mingardo, meanwhile, really comes into her own in the haunting 'Agnus Dei', singing with restrained intensity and wonderful evenness of tone. The recording itself is handsomely engineered and scrupulously balanced. If you care for the work, you will probably want to hear this, for the choral singing above all, though Chailly's performance, with its stronger solo quartet, still leads the field. **Tim Ashley**

Selected comparisons:

Chailly (2/95) (DECC) 444 134-2DX2

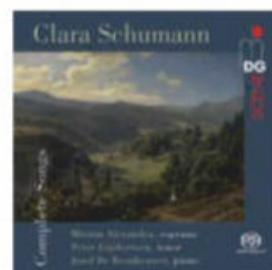
C Schumann

Complete Songs

Miriam Alexandra sop Peter Gijsbertsen ten

Jozef De Beenhouwer pf

Dabringhaus und Grimm (F) MDG903 2114-6
(71' • DDD/DSD • T)



It's good to be able to welcome a survey of Clara Schumann's songs for the

composer's anniversary – they more often than not appear coupled with those of her more bankable husband. MDG's release faces some stiff competition precisely from those mixed recitals, especially when it comes to the three published sets of Opp 12, 13 and 14, but scores points in being marginally more complete than Naxos's 'Complete Songs' from a decade ago, including also the premiere recording of 'O thou my star', an English version of 'Mein Stern'.

There's an advantage, too, in having the songs split between two singers, with tenor Peter Gijsbertsen bringing ringing heroic tone and dramatic urgency to his numbers – at his first entry you might even be forgiven for mistaking him for a baritone – as well as touching tenderness. There's a great deal to enjoy in his account of the fine songs that make up Op 13, although I wouldn't want to be without Wolfgang Holzmair's superb account of three of them with Imogen Cooper (Philips, 5/02 – coupled with Robert's *Kerner Lieder*) or Barbara Bonney's of the complete set. Gijsbertsen makes a no less persuasive case for the precocious works of the early 1830s – the charming, slightly

parlouresque 'Walzer', for example, and the terrific, pointedly Schubertian 'Der Wanderer in der Sägemühle'.

I wish, though, I could be more enthusiastic about Gijsbertsen's soprano colleague on the album. Miriam Alexandra is clearly as formidable a researcher as performer (her PhD was on Pauline Viardot), but the voice, as captured here, lacks firmness and projection, her performances too often marred by intonation issues. It's a shame, since she has some gems to sing, but a quick comparison with the likes of Miah Persson in Op 12 or 'Loreley' show what's missing. A useful album, then, with alert piano-playing from Jozef De Beenhouwer; but seek out performances on those mixed recitals to hear how persuasive these songs can be. **Hugo Shirley**

Complete songs – selected comparison:

Craxton, Djeddikar (NAXO) 8 570747

Op 12, etc – selected comparison:

Persson, Breinl (11/11) (BIS) BIS-SACD1834

Op 13 – selected comparison:

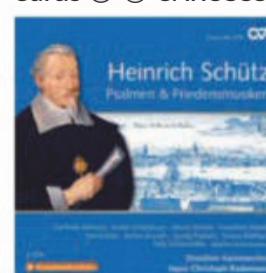
Bonney, Ashkenazy (6/97) (DECC) 452 898-2DH

Schütz

'Psalmen & Friedensmusiken'

An den Wassern zu Babel, SWV500. Auf dich, Herr, trae ich, SWV462. Danklied, 'Fürstliche Gnade', SWV368. Da pacem, Domine, SWV465. Das ist mir lieb, SWV51. Gesang der drei Männer, SWV448. Herr, der du bist vormals, SWV461. Herr, unser Herrscher, SWV449. Herr, wer wird wohnen, SWV466. Mit dem Amphion zwar, SWV501. Osterdialog, 'Weib, was weinst du', SWV443. Syncharma musicum, 'En novus Elysiis', SWV49. Teutoniam dudum belli, SWV338. Trostlied, SWV502. Tugend ist der beste Freund, SWV442. Vater Abraham, erbarme dich mein, SWV477. Veni Sancte Spiritus, SWV475. Wo der Herr nicht das Haus, SWV473. Wo Gott, der Herr, SWV467

Dorothee Mields, Gerlinde Sämann, Isabel Schicketanz, Maria Stosiek sops **David Erler, Stefan Kunath** countertenors **Tobias Mäthger, Georg Poplutz** tens **Martin Schicketanz, Felix Schwandtke** basses **Dresden Chamber Choir, ensemble / Hans-Christoph Rademann**
Carus (F) CARUS83 278 (139' • DDD • T/t)



Over a decade, 19 volumes and many hours of psalms, anthems, Passions, madrigals and motets later, Hans-Christoph Rademann's recording of the complete works of Heinrich Schütz for Carus is at its end. It's an end that brings us full circle.

The composer's Op 1 – his Italian madrigals – launched his career with an elaborate homage to the national style Schütz learnt during his formative years in Venice. That Italian education was the product, as Oliver Geisler's booklet notes remind us, of the patronage of Landgrave Moritz of Hessen-Kassel. What we have here in this final volume are the mature fruits of this same patronage – the public commissions, large-scale Italianate psalms and anthems designed to reflect the patron's splendid generosity and power back at him.

It's a shame that the notes give us such selective and brief guides to these lesser-known works (many of which are omitted from the cursory discussion altogether), often leaving us guessing as to context. What we do know gives us a fascinating portrait of an age in which music had a key public role. Anthems here celebrate aristocratic birthdays, accompany civic and religious ceremonies and provide courtly entertainments.

Rademann's forces bring all the warmth and soft, grainy bloom we've come to expect through this series to the larger-scale works, as well as a rhythmic and expressive lightness that helps give clarity right through some very dense vertical textures. Highlights include the miniature oratorio *Vater Abraham, erbarme dich mein*, an attractive, richly dramatic piece with a delightful closing quartet for two angels, Abraham and Lazarus, and the 12-part *Syncharma musicum*, 'En novus Elysiis', which offers a magnificent sonic pageant. Soloists keep things clean and crisp, their slighter, tighter tone balanced by the grumbling breadth of period trombones and keening brilliance of cornettos.

But most moving (perhaps inevitably) are the handful of private works tucked in at the end of the second disc: the tiny *Trostlied* – a simple chorale composed to mark the death of a baby – and the more extended *Mit dem Amphion zwar*, written on the death of his own beloved wife. Violently expressive verse is matched by music which wears its grief more lightly, passing chromatics cutting deeply in tenor Georg Poplutz's restrained performance. It's a splendid end to Rademann's labour of love, and those final personal works offer a lovely parting glimpse of the private man behind so much public musical spectacle.

Alexandra Coghlan

Tchaikovsky

Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Op 41.

Nine Sacred Choruses

Latvian Radio Choir / Sigvards Klava

Ondine (F) ODE1336-2 (77' • DDD • T/t)

GRAMOPHONE Focus

ELOQUENT VIVALDI

Richard Wigmore welcomes a pair of discs from Delphine Galou and Accademia Bizantina, celebrating the expressive richness of Vivaldi in both sacred and secular music

Vivaldi

'Vivaldi Edition, Vol 59 - Musica sacra per alto' Deus tuorum militum, RV612. Introduzione al Miserere, 'Filiae maestae Jerusalem', RV638. Non in pratis aut in hortis, RV641. Regina coeli, RV615. Salve regina, RV618. Violin Concerto, RV582
Delphine Galou contr **Alessandro Giangrande** ten **Alessandro Tampieri** vn **Accademia Bizantina / Ottavio Dantone** Naïve ® OP30569 (60' • DDD • T/t)

Vivaldi

'Vivaldi Edition, Vol 60 - Arie e cantate per contralto' La Candace - Care pupille; Per dar pace al tuo dolore; Si, si bel volto che v'adoro. Cessate, omai cessate, RV684. Il Giustino - È pur dolce ad un'anima amante. O mie porpore più belle, RV685. Qual in pioggia dorata i dolci rai, RV686. Tieteberga - L'innocenza sfortunata. Tito Manlio - Andrò fida e sconsolata; Liquore ingrato. La verità in cimento - Semplice non temer
Delphine Galou contr **Accademia Bizantina / Ottavio Dantone** Naïve ® OP30584 (58' • DDD • T/t)



And still they come. Vols 59 and 60 in Naïve's heroic complete Vivaldi Edition, now seemingly intent on the home straight, cover sacred and secular music for alto, the composer's favourite voice type. Except for the *Salve regina*, the sacred works were fashioned for talented contraltos at the Pietà, where Vivaldi took over the duties of *maestro di coro* (for no extra fee) in 1713. It's all too easy, of course, to take the Red Priest for granted. Yet even Vivaldi-sceptics might be struck by the expressive power of the music here, whether in the passionate motet for Tenebrae *Filiae maestae Jerusalem*, the mingled vigour and tenderness of the *Salve regina* or the motet *Non in pratis*, with its gravely beautiful central aria.

The French contralto Delphine Galou has long proved herself a fine Vivaldi stylist and sings here with her trademark imagination and involvement (blandness is not in her armoury). In captious mode I'd point to moments where her pure, rather instrumental timbre develops a flutter under pressure. At times her rhetorical intensity can compromise evenness of line and tone. But Galou's singing always compels with its eloquence of phrase and urgent engagement with the text. The tenor Alessandro Giangrande makes a lively duet partner in the hymn *Deus tuorum militum* – determinedly jolly, despite its text. He is, though, less convincing slipping between falsetto and his natural tenor voice in the fragmentary antiphon *Regina coeli*, written for a Pietà contralto with a freakishly low range. Dantone's Accademia Bizantina provide colourful, vividly gestural accompaniments, and with the brilliant Alessandro Tampieri relish the fantasy and flamboyance of the D major Violin Concerto with double orchestra.

Galou and Accademia Bizantina are likewise in their element in the disc of cantatas and opera arias. Most familiar here is the Arcadian chamber cantata *Cessate, omai cessate*, long a countertenor favourite but also recorded by a handful of contraltos, including Sara Mingardo (Opus 111, 11/97). If Mingardo sings with more rounded depth of tone, Galou's no-holds-barred passion and anguish are just as affecting, not least in the terrific final 'vengeance' aria. She finds a bright, sopranoish edge for the cheerful *O mie porpore più belle*, composed to celebrate the new Bishop of Mantua, and brings a virtuoso



Trademark imagination: Delphine Galou excels in Vivaldi

swagger to the horn-fuelled homage cantata *Qual in pioggia dorata*, music to massage a princely ego. Although the booklet note is light on dramatic context (depressingly familiar litany), Galou characterises each of the assorted opera arias with flair. My own highlights included the gentle pathos of 'Andrò fida' from *Tito Manlio*, soft-toned recorders cooing in sympathy with the voice, and Damira's gleefully manipulative 'Semplice non temer', tossed off with real comic panache. Minor reservations aside, both discs are worthy of the consistently high standards set by the whole series. Galou fans and Vivaldi collectors alike should need no encouragement. **G**



Tchaikovsky's setting of the Liturgy has a fundamental place in the history of Russian sacred choral music. It was published in 1879 by Jurgenson without the authorisation of the censors of the Royal Chapel, something that had been indispensable since the time of Bortnyansky, and thus opened the way for composers to move in new stylistic directions, especially with regard to the Russian Orthodox Church's musical past.

While Tchaikovsky himself would later work more seriously with early chant, the Liturgy is freely composed. It is a work of tremendous richness, with many memorable moments; I do not think I know a more impressive setting of the *Trisagion*, for example, and the *Cherubic Hymn* echoes in one's mind long after it has finished sounding. And echo is what this recording does: Klava is utterly unafraid to choose very slow speeds for many of the sections of the work, but never once does he lose sight of the structure or let go of the dramatic tension which is so much a part of Tchaikovsky's music, even his liturgical settings. The Latvian Radio Choir are superb in this repertoire and the decision to include the 'cues' of the priest and deacon is a very good one: it ties the whole work together and reminds the listener that the drama here is placed within a liturgical, not a concert, context. In addition, the choir's diction is superb: I do not ever remember hearing the long text of the Creed so clearly articulated.

To complement the Liturgy, Klava has added the *Nine Sacred Choruses*, written in 1884-85, which include some of Tchaikovsky's finest music. There are three settings of the *Cherubic Hymn*, three other settings for the Divine Liturgy (*Tebe poem*, *Dostoyno est* and the Lord's Prayer), *Da ispravitsya moya* from the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and two superb motet-like works, *Blazhenni yazhe izbral* from the memorial service and *Nine sili nebesniy*, also from the Liturgy of the Presanctified. The Latvian Radio Choir sing them all with passionate intensity, and the engineering is of exemplary clarity. **Ivan Moody**

'Messes de Barcelone et d'Apt'

'Sacred Vocal Music from the 14th Century'
Anonymous Messe d'Apt. Messe de Barcelone interspersed with hymns and motets
Ensemble Gilles Binchois / Dominique Vellard
Evidence © EVCD060 (64' • DDD • T/t)



This programme is built around two Mass settings and two manuscripts thought to preserve polyphonic music from the Papal liturgy at Avignon around 1400. The first Mass is the *Messe de Barcelone*: while not a cyclic Mass, it contains two troped movements, *Gloria* and *Sanctus*, which create a pleasing symmetry around a substantial *Credo* (tantalisingly labelled as by 'Sortes'). Performing in a combination of voices, vielles and gittern, Ensemble Gilles Binchois cultivate an attractively unhurried, brooding quality; particularly in the hymnlike *Kyrie*, which showcases the rich vocal quality of the singers.

Compared with a relatively recent performance by Capella de Ministrers under Carles Magraner (CdM, 8/15), this is a conservative but sensitive offering. The *Gloria* has a nicely varied texture with surprisingly mellifluous tropes given over to countertenor and vielles. The *Credo* is performed with alternating groups of lower voices, emphasising the gravitas of this large central movement. Characterised by gentle, reedy countertenors and bright, light tenors, this ensemble have lots of vocal personality; they keep phrases buoyant while generally avoiding an acceleration towards those delightfully angular *Ars Nova* cadences.

The second Mass is a modern assemblage from the Apt manuscript, an idea borrowed from old scribal practices. Here there is a troped *Kyrie* with fabulous flowing phrases taken by countertenor, after which are two named movements by Depensis (*Gloria*) and Tapissier (*Sanctus*), composers about whom we know frustratingly little.

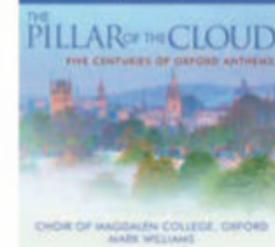
Finally, turning to the motets, de Vitry's *Colla jugo/Bona condit* stands out for Dominique Vellard's gently paced instrumental performance. Remembering the sprightly, chattering (vocal) recording by Sequentia (DHM, 1/92), with its top voice bubbling over with a fast-moving text, these performances by Ensemble Gilles Binchois are determinedly unfussy compared to the exciting, frenetic style often associated with de Vitry. **Edward Breen**

'The Pillar of the Cloud'

'Five Centuries of Oxford Anthems'
L Berkeley O that I once past changing were
Harris Bring us, O Lord God **Harwood** O how glorious is the kingdom **Leighton** Let all the world in every corner sing **Nicholson** O pray for the peace of Jerusalem **Parry** Crossing the Bar **Rose** Lord, I have loved the habitation of

thy house **Rubbra** There is a spirit **Sheppard** The Lord's Prayer **Stainer** Lead, kindly light **Taverner** Christe Jesu, pastor bone **Tomkins** Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom **Walton** A Litany **Weelkes** When David heard **Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford / Mark Williams**

Opus Arte © OACD9045D (61' • DDD • T)



Appointed music director at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 2017, Mark Williams is only now making his first statement with the choir on disc. 'The Pillar of the Cloud' is a mixed recital that pays tribute to Oxford's many composers, whether graduates – Weelkes and Tomkins or, more recently, William Walton and Lennox Berkeley – or those with longer professional associations such as William Harris, Leighton, Parry and Rubbra.

There's some wonderfully, unfairly unfashionable repertoire here. What a joy to find Basil Harwood, Rubbra and Magdalen's own Bernard Rose here alongside more core Oxbridge choral fare. Magdalen's sound has always had an unmannered, forthright quality to it, something Williams celebrates in the jagged, ecstatic dance of Leighton's *Let all the world* and the surging unison swell of the Harwood.

The trebles' naturally bright tone illuminates Berkeley's *O that I once past changing were* but is turned deftly down to achieve the softer blend of Parry's *Crossing the Bar* and Sheppard's setting of the Lord's Prayer. The extended opener *Lead, kindly light* is nicely paced and calibrated for drama, with an outstanding solo from tenor Maximilian Lawrie, while Rubbra's *There is a spirit* puts the fine treble Thomas Pennington-Arnold in the spotlight.

There's real generosity, directness and energy from these singers, but that can just sometimes work against them. Walton's *A Litany* lacks, for me, that spare edginess that can bring out both its extraordinary harmonies and the text's fragile exhortation (though the basses give a wonderful anchor), while the Rubbra feels just a little too earthy, lacking that cloudy impermanence, that sense of the 'spirit' that animates the verse.

The tradition may be a long one but Williams, who recorded this at the end of his first year in post, is still just at the beginning with Magdalen. It will be interesting to see where he takes the choir and its sound over the next few years.

Alexandra Coghlan

WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month **Peter Quantrill**'s point of departure is ...

Messiaen's *Turangalîla-symphonie* (1948)

Acclaimed by Serge Koussevitzky as the most important score since *The Rite of Spring* but dismissed by Boulez as 'brothel music', the *Turangalîla-symphonie* (part two of Messiaen's self-declared 'Tristan trilogy') has continued to divide listeners. As a piece of more secular than sacred inspiration it stands almost alone in Messiaen's output. Yet its elevated eroticism, embodied in the grunts, whoops and swoops of the *concertante* part for ondes martenot, belongs to the expression of yearning for oneness with God in Christ, and joy in his presence, which motivate works as far apart as *L'Ascension* (1933) and *Éclairs sur l'au delà...* (1991). So, for all its moments of splashy kitsch – and maybe because of them too – the 10-movement *Turangalîla* remains a window on to Messiaen's world as alluring and polychromatic as the stained glass of the French Gothic cathedrals where he found a spiritual and musical home. Sir Simon Rattle's recording is distinguished by Peter Donohoe's muscular and glittering virtuosity in the work's central part for piano.

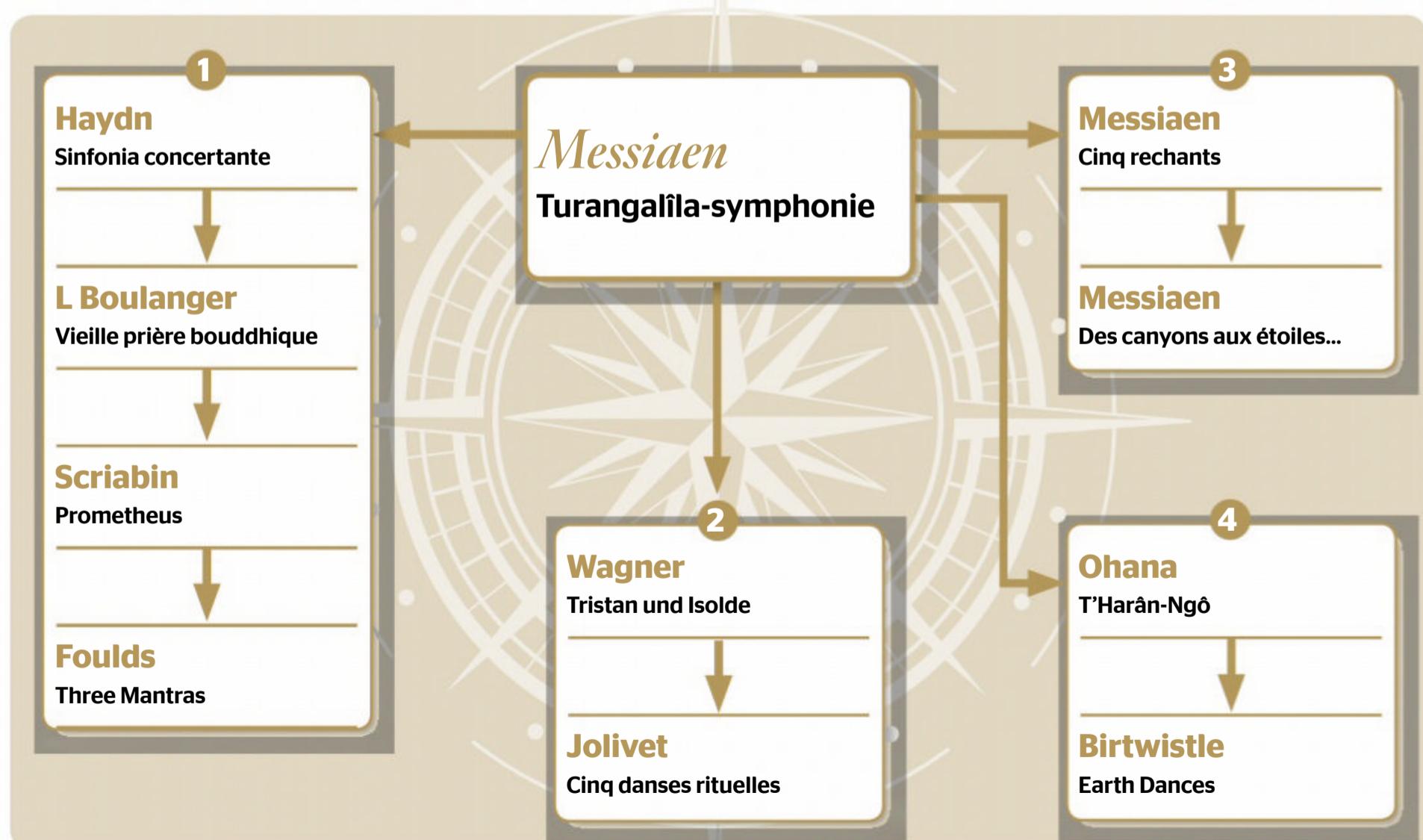
● Soloists; CBSO / Simon Rattle (Warner, 12/87)

1 Precedents

Haydn Sinfonia concertante (1792) While Messiaen (like Tchaikovsky) revered Mozart above all his forebears, it was Haydn (as ever) who established a model for writing symphonic conversations led by first one and then another soloist. For the sake of good box office, a rivalry was concocted by Haydn's impresario Salomon between the composer and his friend and former pupil Pleyel (also resident in London at the time). Within a fortnight or so Haydn had turned out this effortlessly good-humoured concerto-symphony, giving his friends in Salomon's orchestra their moment of glory just as Messiaen wrote *Turangalîla* with usefully career-advancing solo spots for his young pupil (not yet wife) the pianist Yvonne Loriod and her ondes martenot playing sister Jeanne.

● Soloists; Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado (Claves, 2/15)

L Boulanger Vieille prière bouddhique (1917) No one before Messiaen made so comprehensive a synthesis of Indian words,





Where will Messiaen lead you? From Haydn to Birtwistle, we offer some suggestions

rhythms and concepts with a European orchestral apparatus, but Lili Boulanger in one of her final works determined to create a similar marriage of East and West. She worked on this sensuous incantation for tenor, chorus and orchestra throughout the First World War, probably without knowing contemporary works of similarly erotic opulence by Szymanowski such as *The Love Songs of Hafiz* (1911).

● Julian Podger ten Monteverdi Ch; LSO / John Eliot Gardiner (DG, 11/02)

Scriabin Prometheus (1910) Messiaen and Scriabin shared not only synesthesia – associating colours with words and sounds and concepts – but also the skill of putting it to the service of an opulent harmonic palette. The ondes martenot had yet to be invented (in 1928), so Scriabin made do with a ‘colour organ’ (as well as a *concertante* piano part) which would harmonise the rest of the score with a light display. Somehow inevitably, the task of conducting the premiere fell to Koussevitzky, in Moscow in March 1911.

● Anatol Ugorski pf Chicago Sym Chor & Orch / Pierre Boulez (DG)

Foulds Three Mantras (1930) Closer in scale to *Turangalila* than the *Vieille prière* but of similar, all-encompassing ambition, the *Mantras* are all that remain of Foulds’s otherwise discarded and destroyed Sanskrit opera *Avatara* (1919–30). They show his fusion of Western modernism and Indian techniques at its most potent. The high-speed, polytonal thrill ride of No 1, the rapt mysticism of No 2 (complete with Holstian female chorus) and the rhythmically complex, raga-like No 3 make a brief but compelling claim for Foulds as an English Messiaen who after all settled in India for the last four years of his life.

● City of Birmingham Youth Chor; CBSO / Sakari Oramo (Warner, A/04)

2 Models

Wagner Tristan und Isolde (1859) Messiaen himself remained secretive about his methods (not without reason), but a new wave of contemporary scholars has picked over his scores and found borrowings everywhere. Not that a musical microscope is needed to hear the love theme from *Tristan und Isolde* writ large in the sixth movement of *Turangalila*: Messiaen talked later about his

suppressed relationship with Loriod in terms of Wagner and his *Tristan* muse Mathilde Wesendonck.

● Soloists; Vienna State Opera / Christian Thielemann (DG, 8/04)

Jolivet Cinq danses rituelles (1939) Messiaen also lifted a sequence from *Mana* (1935), a piano suite by his contemporary Jolivet, as the harmonic basis of *Turangalila*’s opening movement. Jolivet’s own ritual dances also explore a post-Debussian, post-Stravinskian landscape – no less mystical in mood or Asian in character than *Turangalila*, but with lusher orchestration and riper harmonies. No 3 is an angular marriage dance that supplied Messiaen with a harmonic formula that he reused throughout the 1940s and ’50s, though not in *Turangalila*.

● French National Radio Orchestra / André Jolivet (Erato, 4/71^R)

3 Sequels

Messiaen Cinq rechants (1948) The influence of Indian culture is even more powerful in this *a cappella* conclusion to the *Tristan* trilogy. Messiaen integrated both real and fake Sanskrit words and syllables within French texts, all chosen more for the softness or the violence of their attack than for semantic purposes. We might think about the piece in terms of both Picasso’s cubism and the *Licht* visions of Messiaen’s pupil Stockhausen – as inventing an entirely new vocabulary from familiar means.

● SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart / Rupert Huber (Hänssler)

Messiaen Des canyons aux étoiles... (1974) An American commission and a working holiday in Utah prompted this sequel to *Turangalila*. Messiaen slimmed down the orchestra while expanding the scale (to 12 movements) and increasing the prominence of *concertante* parts for piano and tuned percussion. He retains *Turangalila*’s formal development, with an apex of ecstasy reached among the sandstone rocks of Bryce Canyon, before his gaze turns both inwards and upwards in another long erotic melisma: a love song of fulfilment for Yvonne?

● Soloists; Asko/Schoenberg/Hague Percussion ensembles / Reinbert de Leeuw (Naive, 4/95)

4 Successors

Ohana T’Harân-Ngô (1974) Incantation, dance and rite form the structural scaffolding of *Turangalila* more than the conventions of symphonic technique. So it is with this brilliantly scored, thrilling 18-minute ceremonial by Messiaen’s close contemporary Ohana. Born in Casablanca, Ohana draws on African rather than Indian music and culture to evoke earth, fire, water and primeval energy. More explicitly indebted to *The Rite of Spring*, *T’Harân-Ngô* is the perfect chaser to the more glutinous moments of *Turangalila*.

● Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra / Arturo Tamayo (Timpani)

Birtwistle Earth Dances (1986) The UK premiere of *Turangalila* took place in April 1954, conducted by Walter Goehr, and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies recalled the broadcast as ‘one of the formative musical experiences of my life’. Actually present at the Royal Festival Hall in London was his fellow Manchester student Sir Harrison Birtwistle, who entered the hall as Goehr was rehearsing the percussive rite of ‘Développement de l’amour’: ‘an absolute magical moment’ for him. Messiaen’s superimposition of rhythmic layers, as well as his orchestration, exercise a potent influence on the six geological ‘strata’ of Birtwistle’s own eruptive orchestral rite.

● Cleveland Orchestra / Christoph von Dohnányi (Argo, 8/07)

Available to stream at Qobuz, Apple Music and Spotify

Opera



Mike Ashman on Marschner's rarely heard yet influential Hans Heiling:

'Wagner's borrowings from every aspect of Marschner's opera have helped to keep at least its name before the public' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 108**



Richard Osborne enjoys Rossini's Il barbiere from Verona:

'Some will find this "traditional" to the point of being museum-ready, but others will value its honesty and humour' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 110**

Cavalli

L'Ipermestra

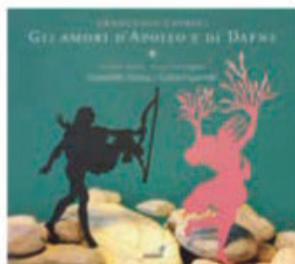
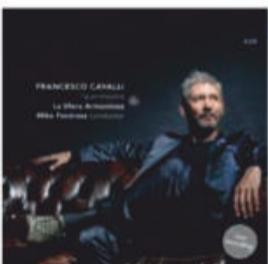
Elena Monti	sop.....	Ipermestra
Emanuela Galli	mez.....	Linceo
Gaëlle Le Roi	sop.....	Elisa
Marcel Beekman	ten.....	Berenice
Sergio Foresti	bass.....	Danao
Mark Tucker	ten	Arbante
La Sfera Armoniosa / Mike Fentross		
Challenge Classics	③ CC72774 (166' • DDD)	
Recorded live at Stadsschouwburg Utrecht,		
August 24, 2006		
Includes synopsis and Italian libretto		

Cavalli

R

Gli amori d'Apollo e di Dafne

Anders Dahlin	ten.....	Apollo
Rosa Domínguez	mez.....	Dafne
Emanuela Galli	sop.....	Aurora
Stephan Van Dyck	ten.....	Cefalo
Paola Quagliata	sop.....	Amore
Maria Hinojosa Montenegro	sop	Filena
Marisú Pavón	sop.....	Procris
Furio Zanasi	bar.....	Alfesibeo/Sonno
Paulin Bündgen	counteren	Cirilla
Mariana Rewersky	mez	Venere/Musa
Salvo Vitale	bass.....	Giove
Valerio Contaldo	ten.....	Pan/Morfeo
Ensemble Elyma / Gabriel Garrido		
Glossa	⑧ ⑨ GCD923519 (156' • DDD)	
From K617 211/12 (2008)		
Includes synopsis and Italian libretto		



Released in the last couple of months, this striking pair of Cavalli recordings were both actually made more than a decade ago. Marking the work's first appearance on disc, Channel Classics gives us Mike Fentross and La Sfera Armoniosa's *L'Ipermestra*, recorded live at the opera's first modern performance, in Utrecht during the 2006 Holland Early Music Festival. Glossa, meanwhile, has reissued Gabriel Garrido's 2008 Ensemble Elyma recording of *Gli amori d'Apollo e di Dafne*, originally released

on the French K617 label, though not reviewed in these pages at the time.

L'Ipermestra was first performed in Florence in 1658 to celebrate the birth of the first son of Phillip IV of Spain. The subject, which ostensibly sits uneasily with the circumstances of the premiere (though the underlying theme is the need for dynastic preservation), is a variant on the myth of the Danaïdes, the 50 daughters of the Argive king Danaus, married to their cousins, the 50 sons of King Aegyptus of Egypt, 49 of whom were murdered by their wives on their wedding nights at Danaus's insistence, after an oracle prophesied he would meet his death at the hands of one of his nephews. Only Ipermestra, in love with her husband Linceo, refuses to take part in this bloodbath, and engineers his escape, to her father's fury. Back in Egypt, however, Linceo is conned by Danaus's general Arbante, who loves Ipermestra himself, into believing her unfaithful, and Argos and Egypt are soon at war.

When Glyndebourne staged the opera two years ago, many commented that the proportion of recitative to aria or arioso was excessively high, which sidesteps the subtlety of Cavalli's methodology. Despite the ostensibly happy ending, and the comedic interjections of Ipermestra's nurse Berenice (six times married and now looking for husband number seven), *L'Ipermestra*'s dramaturgy is rooted in classical tragedy and therefore dependent on declamation for much of its effect. It is the flexibility of Cavalli's recitatives, frequently veering towards the grander contours of melody in a quest for psychological veracity, that gives the work its often hypnotic force.

Fentross's performance is superb, though some, I suspect, might find it eccentric. The realisation is his own, undertaken in collaboration with the organist Jolando Scarpa, and the results are unusual. A sackbut as well as low strings pick out Cavalli's bass lines, which adds an extraordinary sombreness of tone to the whole enterprise. Fentross's conducting is swift and urgent, allowing the big

confrontations to register with great immediacy. Some of the voices are perhaps bigger than we usually find in Baroque music. Mark Tucker's Arbante, in particular, sounds dark and weighty, if suitably obsessive and pressurising. Elena Monti really gets inside Ipermestra's conflict between love for Emanuela Galli's warm-voiced Linceo and filial duty towards Sergio Foresti's overbearing Danao. Marcel Beekman makes a camp, funny Berenice, and Gaëlle Le Roi is touching as Elisa, Ipermestra's lady-in-waiting and Arbante's much-put-upon ex. It's a fine achievement.

There is, however, one maddening drawback in that the accompanying booklet only gives us the libretto in Italian, a problem that also besets Garrido's *Gli amori*. The work itself was first performed in Venice in 1640. Giovanni Busanello's erudite libretto derives from Ovid, weaving together multiple tales from the Metamorphoses to form a complex disquisition on the nature of desire and its attendant catastrophes. The story of Apollo's unrequited love for Daphne forms the kernel of the plot, though twining its way in and out of the main narrative is a counterplot dealing with the goddess Aurora's affair with the mortal Cefalo, to the ignorance of her husband Tithonus and the horror of his wife Procris, whose anguished lament forms a real heart of darkness at the centre of a score that is otherwise often strikingly erotic.

Garrido captures both its sensual mood and dark undertones wonderfully well, though he can be fractionally too languid and could do, on occasion, with some of Fentross's impetuosity. It's finely played and for the most part beautifully sung. Rosa Domínguez's Dafne fends off the attentions of Anders Dahlin's handsome-sounding Apollo with assertive dignity. Galli, the only singer common to both sets, is the persuasive, beguiling Aurora, and her scenes with Stephan Van Dyck's bewildered yet enraptured Cefalo really do send shivers down your spine. At the centre of it all, Marisú Pavón sings Procris's lament with a quiet intensity that resonates down through



Cavalli's *L'Ipermestra* received its first modern performance in 2006, now available on disc and filling a gap in the Baroque discography

the rest of the work. It's another fine set, and if you care remotely for Cavalli you should hear it, along with Fentross's *L'Ipermestra*. In both cases, however, the absence of translations is a real pain, and regrettably there seem to be no English versions of either opera online. **Tim Ashley**

Donizetti

DVD Blu-ray Disc

Il Castello di Kenilworth

Jessica Pratt sop Elisabetta

Carmela Remigio sop Amelia

Xabier Anduaga ten Leicester

Stefan Pop ten Warney

Dario Russo bass Lambourne

Federica Vitali sop Fanny

Chorus and Orchestra Donizetti Opera / Riccardo Frizza

Stage director **Maria Pilar Pérez Aspa**

Video directors **Adriano Figari, Matteo Ricchietti**

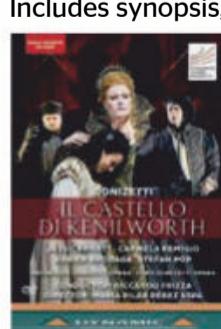
Dynamic ② CDS7834; ③ DVD 37834;

57834 (131' • DDD • 139' • NTSC • 16:9 •

1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Teatro Sociale, Bergamo, November 24 & 30, December 2, 2018

Includes synopsis, CDtext and CDtranslation



Bel canto fans talk in reverent terms about Donizetti's 'Tudor trilogy', *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda* and

Roberto Devereux. Beverly Sills sang their Tudor queens with New York City Opera in the 1970s and Welsh National Opera staged all three operas in a single touring season. But that's to overlook Donizetti's first Tudor effort, *Il Castello di Kenilworth*, premiered in 1829 in Naples, 'neither too well performed nor too well received', according to the composer, who revised it the following year.

The opera takes its inspiration from Sir Walter Scott's 1821 novel *Kenilworth* and focuses on Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester's ('Lay-chest-er' as set in Italian) attempts to court favour with Queen Elizabeth I, which he can only do by keeping his recent marriage to Amelia a secret. To keep his wife out of the way when the queen visits his residence, Kenilworth Castle, Leicester arranges to have Amelia locked up by his equerry, Warney, who lusts after her and stirs up trouble. Unlike the novel, where Warney kills Amelia, the opera ends with Elisabetta forgiving Leicester.

The opera has been recorded twice before, a 1977 performance by Opera Rara at the Camden Festival, then in 1989 at the Donizetti Festival in the composer's home town of Bergamo. Last year's Donizetti Festival saw a new staging by Maria Pilar Pérez Aspa which features on this DVD/Blu-ray (the audio is also released on CD), the first recording of the original 1829 version.

It's fair to surmise that the director blew the budget on the lavish costumes, because there's precious little staging of which to report, a raked set with a few carpets unfurled to suggest location. Amelia is locked up in a wheeled-on cage, while the idea of Elisabetta's personal imprisonment is suggested by being trapped in her robes and regalia.

None of Donizetti's music is especially memorable, apart from the use of a glass harmonica in Amelia's aria 'Par che mi dica ancora', seemingly a dry run for the instrument's appearance in the mad scene of *Lucia di Lammermoor* a few years later. The Donizetti Festival gathered a respectable cast under the lively Italian conductor Riccardo Frizza and the results are enjoyable. Jessica Pratt is a spirited soprano in *bel canto* repertoire and gives Elisabetta plenty of coloratura fire. Carmela Remigio has a warmer soprano and presents a sympathetic Amelia. The confrontation between the two women presages the Elisabetta-Maria Stuarda face-off but without the same venom.

The tenors come off less well. Xabier Anduaga is a decent *bel canto* stylist as Leicester, although his voice becomes pinched in the nosebleed territory, and Stefan Pop is no more than serviceable as the villainous Warney. **Mark Pullinger**

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NAHUEL DI PIERRO, BASS

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Lavish costumes, sparse staging: Donizetti's *Il Castello di Kenilworth*, live from Bergamo, is given a spirited account

Flury

A Florentine Tragedy. *The Death of Sappho*

Julia Sophie Wagner sop **Long Long** tenor **Daniel Ochoa** bar **Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra / Paul Mann**

Toccata Classics (F) TOCC0427 (53' • DDD)

Includes libretto and translation



Puccini and Busoni were among the composers who thought about setting

Oscar Wilde's steamy play *A Florentine Tragedy* as an opera. The subject matter makes a tight operatic three-hander: Simone, a wealthy merchant in 16th-century Florence, discovers local prince Guido Bardi paying court to his wife, Bianca. Simone feigns hospitality but later challenges Guido to a duel, defeating the prince then strangling him to death. This turns on his wife, Bianca, who asks 'Why did you not tell me you were so strong?' to which Simone replies, 'Why did you not tell me you were beautiful?', at which point the two kiss passionately over the prince's corpse.

Karl Audrieth got to Wilde's play first (1913-14) but it is Alexander Zemlinsky's version (composed in 1916) that is the best

known. Even then, recordings of the Zemlinsky are rare and staged productions are rarer, although Dutch National Opera mounted it – paired, appropriately enough with Florentine comedy *Gianni Schicchi* – in 2017. But what of the version by Richard Flury?

The Swiss composer perhaps needs an introduction, as this appears to be the first review of his music to appear in *Gramophone*'s pages. Born in the tiny town of Biberist in northern Switzerland, he studied with Hans Huber and Felix Weingartner, and later in Vienna with Joseph Marx. Flury then taught in Solothurn – between Berne and Basel – where he conducted the orchestra and staged his operas and ballets at the local theatre. He composed prolifically in a late-Romantic manner, wedded to tonality, but with some daring harmonies.

Flury's operatic setting of Wilde nearly landed him in hot water. Apparently he was unaware of the existence of Zemlinsky's opera and the Austrian composer's publisher (mistakenly) believed it had sole rights to Max Meyerfeld's German translation of the play, which Flury had also used. Where Zemlinsky offers a stormy prelude, Flury plunges straight into the action, his setting over 10 minutes shorter

than its predecessor. Flury's version has an almost *verismo* feel to it: brassy declarations seem to echo the fanfares in *Turandot*; vocal lines have Italianate fluidity to them.

Paul Mann conducts the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra in a pulsating account. The three soloists are all dependable, although baritone Daniel Ochoa – who bears much of the score's weight as Simone – sounds stretched by the role's demands. Chinese tenor Long Long hits the heroic heights when he praises Bianca's beauty. Julia Sophie Wagner sings well in the under-developed role of the merchant's wife. Happily we hear rather more of her in Flury's 10-minute scena *The Death of Sappho*. Composed around the same time as *A Florentine Tragedy*, *Sappho* is lushly orchestrated and allows the soprano great dramatic scope. Toccata's rich recording allows both works to bloom and this disc is well worth exploring.

Mark Pullinger

L Kaminsky

As One

Kelly Markgraf bar Hannah Before

Sasha Cooke mez Hannah After

Fry Street Quartet / Steven Osgood

Bright Shiny Things (F) BSTC0127 (75' • DDD)

Includes libretto



This is really rather good. Styled a chamber opera, *As One* (2014) is also a sequence of 15 songs (with instrumental introduction), scored for two solo singers and string quartet, giving it – as here on disc – the feel of an integrated song-cycle. It succeeds as both forms equally well but its dramatic nature justifies the several notable, acclaimed stagings it has received in the US.

Unsurprisingly, it is *As One's* subject matter that has received the most attention, relating the journey of the transgender Hannah, born a boy, to womanhood in the teeth of familial, educational and social opposition. The two singers represent Hannah's inner monologue, the baritone her birth self – 'Hannah Before' – the mezzo the finally reconciled 'Hannah After'. Both sing throughout, representing the contrasting sides of Hannah's personality, though – as one might expect – dominance subtly shifts from male to female as the work progresses.

Part 1, comprising the Introduction and first six songs, deals with Hannah's childhood, the recognition of her nature and her efforts to keep it secret. In Part 2 (songs 7–14), emergent adulthood brings both deeper joy and greater conflict, culminating with a 'harrowing assault': here, the mezzo recounts the incident counterpointed by the baritone's listing a string of victims of even more horrendous attacks around the world. The third and concluding part is a single, extended aria, 'Norway' (prefigured by a snatch of Grieg in the preceding song), the refuge where Hannah finds a degree of peace.

Laura Kaminsky's mostly luminous score elicits a radiant performance from the six performers. Sasha Cooke and Kelly Markgraf are beautifully balanced as the voices in Hannah's head, at times inward-looking, at times reflecting the outside world, but concluding 'as one'. The Fry Street Quartet accompany with elegance and subtlety. A remarkable achievement.

Guy Rickards

Lehár

Die lustige Witwe

Marlis Petersen sop.....Hanna Glawari
Iurii Samoilov bar.....Graf Danilo Danilowitsch
Barnaby Rea bass.....Baron Mirko Zeta
Kateryna Kasper sop.....Valencienne
Martin Mitterutzner ten.....Camille de Rosillon
Theo Lebow ten.....Vicomte Cascada
Michael Porter ten.....Raoul de St Brioche
Klaus Haderer sngr.....Njegus

Chorus of Frankfurt Opera; Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Joana Mallwitz
Oehms F ② OC983 (97' • DDD)
Recorded live, May & June 2018
Includes synopsis



The Merry Widow wasn't born a billionairess, and before Lehár's masterpiece was a worldwide smash – and long before it became the stuff of superstar casts and Metropolitan Opera galas – it was simply a potboiler by an unproven composer, rushed onstage with minimal rehearsal and second-hand sets to fill a gap in the Theater an der Wien's New Year schedule. Which is by way of saying that while it's always nice to have Schwarzkopf, Terfel or the Vienna Philharmonic, it's possible to stage an enjoyable, idiomatic *Widow* that's entirely in the spirit of the piece without a single big name in sight.

Perhaps that sounds like I'm managing expectations for this new recording, taken from live performances at the Frankfurt Opera in May and June 2018. But this is a perfectly enjoyable account, possibly closer in spirit to the piece's light-footed, popular theatre roots than the more sumptuous classic recordings. It certainly conveys the atmosphere of a live performance, complete with audience laughter, applause, onstage thuds, a recessed and sometimes splashy chorus and some of the most raucous grisettes I've heard on disc.

All part of the fun, of course, and there's only one really serious oddity. The Frankfurt director Claus Guth reassigns Camille and Valencienne's Act 1 Hauslichkeit duet to Danilo and Hanna, and repositions it – incomprehensibly, in the absence of any printed libretto – before Danilo's usual entrance. Don't expect any help from the booklet note, either; a word-perfect parody of Teutonic academese which references Adorno and (I'm not joking) Samuel Beckett.

Those provisos apart, there's plenty to enjoy, starting with bright and buoyant conducting from Joana Mallwitz. She takes care of details without overindulging them, whether Lehár's swirling woodwind countermelodies or the quiet string slides and little splashes of harp that accompany the Vilja-Lied. As Camille and Valencienne, Martin Mitterutzner and Kateryna Kasper make a likeable couple, and if you might have hoped for a little more shine to Mitterutzner's top notes, Kasper's soprano has a smiling quality that gives the Pavilion duet the requisite glow.

Iurii Samoilov is perhaps a slightly woolly-sounding Danilo – which makes perfect sense in his hungover early scenes. He does smarten up a little as the story progresses, without ever cutting what you might call a dash. But he blends nicely with Marlis Petersen's singing as Hanna; and while it's not fair to the rest of the cast to say that she carries the show, her soft-centred tone and graceful, light-touch phrasing certainly give this performance its heart. Her Vilja has a poise and a youthful freshness that I found utterly beguiling. Hanna Glawari might be a widow but she's no moping Marschallin, and (musically, at least) this performance never forgets to be merry. **Richard Bratby**

Marschner

Hans Heiling
Heiko Trinsinger bar Hans Heiling
Jessica Muirhead sop Anna
Jeffrey Dowd ten Konrad
Rebecca Teem sop Queen of the Earth Spirits
Bettina Ranch mez Gertrude
Karel Martin Ludvik bass-bar Stephan
Hans-Günter Papirnik bar Niklas
Chorus of Aalto Theatre; Bergwerksorchester
Consolidation; Essen Philharmonic Orchestra / Frank Beermann
Oehms F ② OC976 (140' • DDD)
Recorded, February 20-24, 2018
Includes synopsis and German libretto



A spot of research – but not in the regular catalogues – should uncover around half a dozen recordings of Heinrich Marschner's 1833 *Schauerromantik* ('horror romance') opera. They include the live DVD from Cagliari which I reviewed in December 2005 and a 1960s broadcast from Cologne under Joseph Keilberth with a strong-looking cast including Hermann Prey in the title-role. If you've looked into the early history of German Romantic opera, especially its connections with Wagner, the names of both composer and work will be familiar. But you'll only find excerpts from the score – especially 'An jenem Tag, da du mir Treue versprochen', Heiling's declaration of love to the mortal village girl Anna – on recital discs of pre-1950s singers.

The very title of that aria will remind you of Erik pleading with Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer* and indeed it's Wagner's borrowings from every aspect of Marschner's opera (libretto by its star singer and Wagner colleague-to-be Eduard Devrient) that have helped keep at least its

name before the public. The younger composer took both musical and dramatic hints from *Hans Heiling*, repaying them with the interest of strengthening what he had ‘stolen’ both melodically and dramaturgically. Listen to the scene in Act 2 where Heiling’s good-at-heart mother the Queen of the Earth Spirits warns Anna off her spirit of a son and you will hear what sounds like a draft of the Todesverkündigung from *Die Walküre* 20 years down the road. And, like Wagner’s Dutchman, Heiling offers jewels to tempt his would-be bride.

The present recording is drawn live from the stage of Essen’s opera. It grieves me to say that it is very uneven in quality. Jeffrey Dowd will not be the first tenor occasionally to be confounded by the merciless tessitura of Konrad, Marschner’s Erik. Tuning also sometimes affects his Anna. The Essen version performs the dialogue, and with the ‘right’ people doing it in the ‘right’ places, but, although similar in subject and content, it is not at all the dialogue offered in my Universal Edition vocal score ‘revised and completed after the original’ by Wilhelm Kienzl. But the only cut I can see comes in the *Der Freischütz*-like wedding preparations in Act 3, one of the passages where Marschner sets aside his more epic template and lets his scoring intriguingly recreate Bohemian folk and dance music. If you enjoy the atmosphere in those horror-film village scenes set near a wicked Count’s castle where all are afraid to speak to strangers, you will warm to the unsubtle fun that Marschner/Devrient have with Konrad’s friends Stephan and Niklas.

If you want this opera inexpensively on new CDs, as of now this is your unique but not wholly brilliant choice. The 2005 Dynamic DVD – if you can still find it – has a stronger cast. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparison:

Palumbo (12/05) (DYNA) **DVD** 33467

Mozart

Die Zauberflöte



Mauro Peter ten..... Tamino
Christiane Karg sop..... Pamina
Albina Shagimuratova sop..... Queen of the Night
Adam Plachetka bass-bar..... Papageno
Maria Nazarova sop..... Papagena
Matthias Goerne bar..... Sarastro
Tareq Nazmi bass..... Speaker
Michael Porter ten Monostatos
Members of the Vienna Boys’ Choir; Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Constantinos Carydis
Stage director Lydia Steier
Video director Michael Beyer
C Major Entertainment **DVD** 749708;
Blu-ray 749804 (144' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)
Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, August 2018



This production from last year’s Salzburg Festival has much charm but it is fundamentally so wrong-headed that I hardly know where to start. Perhaps influenced by Adrian Noble’s *Hänsel und Gretel* (EuroArts, 2/17), which was set in a Victorian nursery, Lydia Steier places the action in a middle-class household in Vienna before the First World War. During the Overture the family is at table, while tradesmen deliver goods downstairs. Father reads something disturbing in his newspaper – the assassination of Franz Ferdinand? – and rushes out. Mother has a tantrum. Only Grandfather remains calm, and after the children have said their bedtime prayers he begins to read them the story of the Magic Flute, chapter by chapter. The children become the Three Boys of the opera, the maids are the Three Ladies; Mother is the Queen of the Night, the butcher’s boy is

Papageno and the boy delivering the coal is Monostatos.

Most of Schikaneder’s dialogue is replaced by the Grandfather’s narration, engagingly read by Klaus Maria Brandauer, who sometimes – not too often – speaks over the music. The boys participate in the action, of course, when not listening to the story. Tamino is dressed as a wooden toy soldier, with apple-red cheeks. The Queen, mysteriously, is in bridal white. The temple is peopled by grotesques: acrobats, jugglers, men on stilts. Pamina is a doll in a rah-rah skirt. Sarastro, in topper and striped trousers, is described as a magician but could be the Animal Trainer from Berg’s *Lulu*. And when the Speaker emerges for the beginning of Tamino’s journey towards enlightenment we see a grinning jackanapes chomping on a cigar.

That is enough to make you grit your teeth, though I suppose some might find it entertaining. It’s the end that really takes the biscuit. The final trial, by fire and water, consists of Tamino and Pamina watching footage of First World War carnage, after which Monostatos and the Three Ladies are shot on the orders of Sarastro; the Queen too, perhaps, but the camera cuts away at the crucial moment. You can forget the opera’s crucial message of the triumph of light over darkness. Not surprisingly, the three boys are deeply distressed.

There hardly seems any point in commenting on the singing and playing. Constantinos Carydis pulls the tempos around: often too fast and too finicky, but the Vienna Philharmonic are with him all the way. It’s ironic that despite using the New Mozart Edition he adds piano, harpsichord and organ. One of his best moments is the pause before the aching postlude to Christiane Karg’s beautiful ‘Ach, ich fühl’s’. For a baritone, Matthias Goerne copes better than you might expect with Sarastro’s bottom notes. The three

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boys act and sing wonderfully well. When Papagno discovers Pamina he is clutching what looks like an enormous turkey: an all too apt symbol, unfortunately, of this misconceived farrago. **Richard Lawrence**

Rossini



Il barbiere di Siviglia

Leo Nucci bar	Figaro
Nino Machaidze sop	Rosina
Dmitry Korchak ten	Almaviva
Carlo Lepore bass	Doctor Bartolo
Ferruccio Furlanetto bass	Don Basilio
Manuela Custer mez	Berta
Nicolò Ceriani bar	Fiorello
Gocha Abuladze bar	Officer
Chorus and Orchestra of the Arena di Verona / Daniel Oren	

Stage director **Hugo de Ana**

Video director **Myriam Hoyer**

Bel Air Classiques **F** DVD BAC169; **F** Blu-ray Disc (137' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, August 2018

Includes synopsis



The great Italian baritone Leo Nucci is one of music's indestructibles. How else can one explain a 76-year-old holding spellbound the vast audience in the Verona Arena with a rendering of Figaro's entrance aria of rare skill and vocal relish? Nor does it end there. With cries of 'Bis!' ringing round the arena, Nucci repeats the cavatina with, if anything, even more relish and élan.

Musical pantomime? Possibly. But there's a sense in which *Il barbiere* is pantomime, or a *commedia dell'arte* version of it. It is this tradition from which director Hugo de Ana takes his cue. Naysayers will find his production 'traditional' to the point of being museum-ready. Others will value its uncomplicated honesty and good humour. It's certainly far closer to Rossini than the kind of witless reinvention we're obliged to suffer in, say, Annabel Arden's recent Glyndebourne production (Opus Arte, 8/17).

The Verona Arena might seem an odd place to stage *Il barbiere*. It would certainly have surprised Rossini, who conducted there, at Metternich's invitation, during the 1822 Congress of Verona. But that was before the age of television. I imagine the 2018 Verona audience enjoyed its evening under the Italian night sky, even though de Ana's staging, superbly directed for the cameras by Myriam Hoyer, was primarily designed for home viewing by the larger audience beyond.

In case you are wondering, there is no hint of Nucci running out of steam as the evening unfolds. He plays the entire role with nice timing, along with a veteran's sense of those notes you need to sing and those you can finesse yet still give a characterful impression of the role. The fact that he moves more like the elderly Dr Bartolo than Rossini's restlessly peripatetic barber is neither here nor there, particularly when the actual Dr Bartolo, the predictably excellent Carlo Lepore, is playing hand-in-glove with Nucci.

The other veteran performer is the 70-year-old Ferruccio Furlanetto. He delivers the goods as a splendidly saturnine Don Basilio: the Calumny aria firmly down in C, as was common practice in the Chaliapin era and after.

Away from this vocal gerontocracy, Dmitry Korchak confirms his position as one the best of today's Almavivas, while Nino Machaidze is a pleasingly agreeable (and, where necessary, pleasingly disagreeable) Rosina. Indeed, it's luxury casting throughout: witness the casting of Manuela Custer as Dr Bartolo's housekeeper Berta. It's not often that her Act 2 *aria di sorbetto* proves to be a showstopper. Conductor Daniel Oren, an old Verona hand, directs with pace and purpose, while allowing the score to dance and sing in a way that's rarely heard nowadays.

As a one-off live event, this is not going to dethrone Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's superb 1971-72 studio-made film of his own celebrated Milan staging (DG, 3/02, 8/05). That is *hors concours*, and promises to remain so. But Nucci's Figaro is something for the archives, too. **Richard Osborne**

Verdi

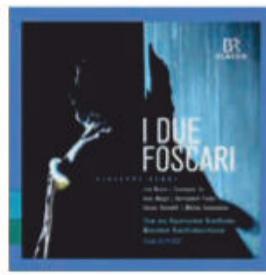
I due Foscari

Leo Nucci bar	Francesco Foscari
Ivan Magrì ten	Jacopo Foscari
Guanqun Yu sop	Lucrezia Contarini
Miklós Sebestyén bass-bar	Jacopo Loredano
István Horváth ten	Barbarigo
Bernadett Fodor mez	Pisana
Moon Yung Oh ten	Officer
Matthias Ettmayr bass	Servant
Bavarian Radio Chorus; Munich Radio Orchestra / Ivan Repušić	

BR-Klassik **F** ② 900328 (102' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Prinzregententheater, Munich, November 23 & 25, and Müpa, Budapest, November 27, 2018

Includes synopsis



When Achille De Bassini created the role of Francesco Foscari in Verdi's

I due Foscari in 1844, he was in his mid-twenties. But Verdi's work, a follow-up to *Ernani* that's distantly based on Byron, has recently found special favour as a vehicle for singers closer in age to the historical *ottuagenario* Doge than to De Bassini.

There have been two filmed performances from Plácido Domingo in baritone mode reviewed in these pages in just the last couple of years (9/16 and 12/17), and here Leo Nucci adds a new recording to a couple of his own filmed versions. The appeal of the work as a vehicle for these singers is understandable, but the composer himself had doubts about his subject – originally slated for Venice itself but finally premiered in Rome – and Francesco Maria Piave was ultimately unsuccessful in turning it into compelling drama: it's a work that can feel more like a loose assemblage of standard scenes, an early study for a later masterpiece, *Simon Boccanegra*.

But *I due Foscari* bursts with all the energy and invention characteristic of early Verdi, and Ivan Repušić's conducting on this live recording made in Munich last autumn (following up on the same team's recordings of *Luisa Miller* and *La rondine*) is full of vim and vitality. There's excellent playing from his rich, refined-sounding orchestra (especially good in the various soulful motifs that weave their way through the score) and superb contributions from the Munich Radio Choir.

And Nucci can still deliver in the title-role. He brings real dramatic authority and displays impressive residual heft in his baritone. There's no hiding the signs of age, though: the voice often sounds nasal and dry, and he has to resort to hectoring in the final act. Listen to Piero Cappuccilli in his prime on the classic Lamberto Gardelli set to hear what this music can sound like.

Nor can Ivan Magrì quite match Gardelli's young Carreras for thrills as Jacopo Foscari; but the young Italian is an appealing singer with a bright tone and plenty of style. Guanqun Yu also makes a strong impression as Lucrezia, her soprano powerful and focused, with a nice Italianate colour to it. But I miss a bit of fire in the characterisation, and she tires during her longer scenes.

No one with the Gardelli recording should feel the need to rush out and replace it, and BR-Klassik's measly documentation counts against the new release. Despite the caveats, though, this is a modern set that is both dramatically engaging and enjoyable – and very well recorded too. **Hugo Shirley**

Selected comparison:

Gardelli (4/78^R) (PHIL/DECC) 475 8697DM2



Adam Plachetka as Papageno and Christiane Karg as Pamina star in an eccentric production of *Die Zauberflöte* from last year's Salzburg Festival

'Handel's Queens'

'Cuzzoni & Faustina'

Ariosti Caio Marzio Coriolano - Rendi al Padre in me la figlia **Bononcini** Astianatte - Ascolta o figlio; Deh! lascia o core; Menuet; Sento che già il pensier **Greene** La Libertà **Handel** Admeto - Gelosia, spietata Aletto. Alessandro - Alla sua gabbia d'oro; Placa l'alma; Solitudini amate. Giulio Cesare in Egitto - Da tempeste il legno infranto. Ottone - È tale Otton? ... Falsa immagine. Riccardo primo - Il volo così fido al dolce. Scipione - Scoglio d'immota fronte. Tolomeo - Elisa che ricerchi ... Voglio amore **Hasse** Artaserse - Mi credi spietata?. Dalisa - Se fosse il mio diletto **Leo** Il Ciro riconosciuto - Quel nome se ascolto **Orlandini** Nerone - Stelle, tiranne stelle **Pollarolo** Ariodante - Sinfonia; Serba le belle lagrime **Porpora** Poro - Son prigionera d'amore **Torri** Amadis di Grecia - La sua disperazione ... Se a ammollire il crudo amante **Vinci** L'Elpidia - Dea trifrome, astro fecondo (arr Handel) **Vivaldi** Scanderbeg - Fra catene ognor penando; Nelle mie selve natie **Mary Bevan, Lucy Crowe** sop

London Early Opera / Bridget Cunningham hpd

Signum M ② SIGCD579 (128' • DDD)

Includes texts and translations



This is not the first time Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, the star

sopranos Handel engaged for his London operas in the 1720s, have ridden again: Emma Kirkby and Catherine Bott summoned them over 20 years ago (Hyperion, 11/97), invoking the title 'The Rival Queens' as a reminder that the 18th-century London press egged the public into believing in unseemly competition between the two. Bridget Cunningham plays down the rivalry bit, and the Handel connection too, drawing on arias by some of the other composers who wrote for these singers over a period of nearly 20 years. She has researched well – as her generously informative booklet notes reveal – and the result is no fewer than 15 premiere recordings. Even among the chosen Handel arias, only 'Da tempeste' from *Giulio Cesare* could be called well known.

A worthy project, then, and indeed it is fascinating to have a less Handel-centric view than usual. For of course Bordoni and Cuzzoni had careers on the continent either side of their time in London, and thus we are able to drop in on the north Italian scene in music by Pollarolo, Porpora, Orlandini, Vivaldi, Leo and Vinci, as well as Munich and Dresden in the company of Torri and Hasse (who happened to be Bordoni's husband). Some of these figures were representatives of the new Neapolitan style, edging towards the pre-Classical

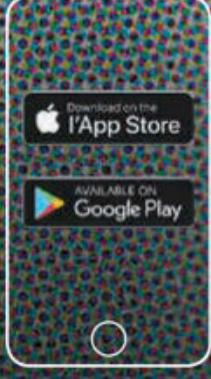
and emphasising a certain kind of vocal virtuosity, and it is interesting to hear Handel – perhaps inspired by his singers – moving a little bit that way in the trilling and tripleting of 'Alla sua gabbia d'oro'.

More importantly, this soundly made programme is both pleasing and intriguing: Vivaldi's 'Nelle mie selve natie' leaves the voice bravely unaccompanied between ritornellos; Leo's 'Quel nome se ascolto' makes muscular use of syncopation and chromatic slides; and Bononcini's 'Deh! lascia o core' is truly touching. We can't ever know what these two great singers actually sounded like, of course, but Lucy Crowe plays Cuzzoni as a bright soprano whose technical precision and agile upward-leaping ornaments combine with musicality to impress and move, while Mary Bevan offers a Bordoni with a lower centre of gravity, generally darker and more directly theatrical; if she is less comfortable than Crowe in passagework, she matches her for dramatic presence in a number such as Handel's 'Gelosia, spietata Aletto'. The orchestra, it must be said, do not always conform; though perfectly stylish, they can nevertheless be wiry and in need of a shot more electricity. For lovers of Baroque singing though, this recital should be a welcome guest. **Lindsay Kemp**

If Chopin's nocturnes are your evening ritual.



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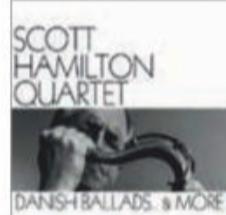
The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

Scott Hamilton Quartet

Danish Ballads... & More

Stunt F STUCD 18102



Having previously recorded an album for Stunt that concentrated on Swedish ballads, Hamilton now shifts his attention to 10 more even-paced pieces but this time of Danish origin, with the same trio in support. While some of these themes may be familiar, their composers may be less so. Oscar Pettiford, who had settled in Copenhagen, wrote 'Montmartre Blues' at the time he and Dexter Gordon were often to be heard at that city's Club Montmartre; Hamilton digs in happily on this one, the energy building nicely, Lundgren into his stride. 'My Little Anna' is by the late Danish bass player NHØP and was written for his daughter; it's a

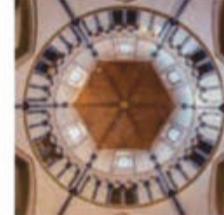
pretty tune and allows Hamilton to meander pleasantly around the theme. That, to be honest, is pretty much what he does throughout this engaging if relatively undemanding outing. Hamilton found a way to play that suited him decades ago and he continues to please audiences wherever he goes. Unblemished sound, unhurried melodic control, a centred approach, and yes, a sense that all is right with the world.

Peter Vacher

Mark Lockheart & Roger Sayer

Salvator Mundi

Edition F 1132



Within six months of releasing Mark Lockheart's painterly orchestral project *Days on Earth*, Edition Records now presents the Loose Tubes and Polar

Bear saxophonist/composer improvising on Anglican hymns in a duo with Roger Sayer, the organist of London's acoustically haunting Temple Church. On the softly piping title-track by 17th-century organist John Blow, Lockheart gracefully sustains its discreet triplet bounce in his improvisation, and Sayer's ghostly organ ostinato swirls around murmuring soprano sax repeat-notes and purring runs as the famous traditional theme of 'In Dulci Jubilo' accelerates from meditation to a gentle churn. Tallis's 'Third Tune for Archbishop Parker's Psalter' gets a minimalism-driven organ part and a more rugged appearance for the tenor sax. The shapely lyricism of this music makes it a worthy shelf-companion to Garbarek's *Officium*, or Surman's *A Biography of the Rev Absalom Dawe*, though it's a little more improvisationally cautious than such stablemates as those. John Fordham

World Music

Debashish Bhattacharya

Joy!Guru

Unzipped Fly Records F UFCDO14



'Here Comes the Moon King', the 12-minute opening track, sets the mood. It begins with a prelude of tingling

stillness; the slide guitar high in the night sky, shimmering like a firefly. Apart from a Hawaiian moment, most of the seven tracks here have a night time flavour for the obvious reason they were recorded in an all-night session in a studio at Polish Radio.

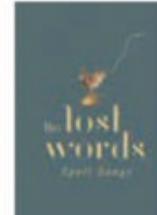
The 14-minute 'Midnight Raga' once again brings us calm, delicacy and magic, with notes that slide, bend and go down to the sublime lower registers of Bhattacharya's chaturangi guitar. It's followed by 'Chaturangi Express' – a four-minute shooting star flashing through the heavens.

Bhattacharya is joined by two Polish musicians, Wojtek Traczyk on double bass and Hubert Zemler on drums, and they respond sympathetically to Bhattacharya's music and bring a couple of compositions by Traczyk. It was a clearly a thrilling and productive night's work. Simon Broughton

Various Artists

The Lost Words: Spell Songs

Quercus Records F QRCD04



Spell Songs made its stage debut earlier this year, its music sprung from the 'spell songs' of nature writer Robert Macfarlane and the nature images of artist Jackie Morris. Each of these 'spell songs' is dedicated to bringing words that have begun to vanish from 21st-century children's vocabularies – acorn, adder, bramble, conker ... It's a musical companion

piece to the book, and now comes as a CD-book or deluxe vinyl set, complete with new spells by Macfarlane and paintings by Morris.

The eight musicians – Karine Polwart, Julie Fowlis, Seckou Keita, Kris Drever, Kerry Andrew, Rachel Newton, Beth Porter and Jim Molyneux – congregated under the patronage of Folk by the Oak in January, recorded immediately afterwards at Rockfield studios and performed four sell-out shows in February.

Spell Songs proves to be exquisite musical reimaginings and settings, with a strong collaborative spirit, especially on the likes of 'Willow', featuring Seckou Keita's kora and voice paired with the voice of Rachel Newton. 'Scatterseed' is another highlight, a Kris Drever special with Keita's kora shimmering against Drever's guitar. An outstanding production and keepsake.

Tim Cumming

SONGLINES

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REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

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Pioneering quartets from New York

Peter Quantrill rediscovers a quartet who played the old as well as the new

How to begin with Boccherini? Sure, the Brilliant Classics box nestles on my shelf, all 37 discs of it, enclosing a fair representation of his chamber output and a smattering of vocal music in respectable – useful, to be more blunt – period-style performances. The music's personality remains elusive. Where to drop the needle on all those quartets and quintets?

The **New Music String Quartet** could have put me right long ago, had I known more of them than their unpromisingly plain name until this beautifully remastered and presented collection of their Columbia recordings. Perhaps the secret to these vitally engaging performances lies in that name: played as if they really had been written yesterday, Boccherini's quartets come off the page as more than a missing link between Vivaldi and Haydn. And the four examples here are so various in style and ambition. Op 58 No 2 opens with two graceful dance movements before a *Larghetto malincolino* of inconsolable pathos. Set in swaying motion by a Spanish-inflected bass line, Op 2 No 2 builds towards a tightly stitched fugue. The B minor Op 58 No 4 opens with a hot-tempered declamation that would not disgrace Beethoven's Op 18 set. Like Scarlatti at his keyboard or Haydn at his desk, Boccherini seems (in these performances) to reinvent himself from scratch with each quartet.

The box is packed with discoveries out of all proportion to its modest size, and the hit-rate may be attributed to a combination of astute A&R on the part of Columbia and the ambitions of four young American musicians, very much led from the front by Broadus Erle 'with more than a touch of genius', as Tully Potter puts it in his invaluable booklet essay. Erle it was who founded the NMSQ in 1945 and three years later gathered the colleagues who

made these recordings in New York within the brief span of 1949–56, before lack of a permanent residency caused the group to disband. The viola player Walter Trampler surely hit the nail on the head: 'Some of our best engagements came about only because the sponsors were sophisticated enough to know that we would play only one contemporary piece on a programme.'

Without the benefit of live broadcasts, it's hard to say how the NMSQ sounded outside the airless acoustic of Columbia's 30th St Studio, but they recorded well. Erle's bright and forwardly projected tone is well balanced in the mix, with plenty of room for Trampler and second violinist Matthew Raimondi to make telling contributions to four of the teenage Mozart's 'Milanese' quartets, K155–158.

The two albums most closely resembling standard repertoire contain Mendelssohn (Op 13 and Op 44 No 3) and Schumann (Op 41 Nos 2 and 3), and these too are done with an urgent, gripping sense of how the music looked fresh on the page, no stylistic conventions taken for granted, analogous to the approach of contemporary-specialist conductors such as Leibowitz, Scherchen and Maderna when they addressed themselves to old music. Then there's another rarity, the 45-minute epic written by the 18-year-old Hugo Wolf, in which the New Music group outstrip even the LaSalle Quartet for strident and ardent expression in realising the work's unique Bruckner-meets-Schoenberg sound world.

Which brings us to the recording project that made the NMSQ's reputation, the Modern American Music Series supported by Columbia and the Fromm Music Foundation in an act of patriotic philanthropy almost unimaginable today. It was composers such as Virgil Thomson, Roger Sessions and Wallingford Riegger who chose the quartet to record

their music, under their supervision, and the results are distinguished by a technical assurance borne of Erle's insistence on painstaking rehearsal, yielding performances of unimpeachable authority as well as real passion.

It is inspiring to hear anew how much the legacy of the recently late Schoenberg meant to the next generation of composers. Riegger's Second Quartet is an undoubted highlight, unfolding lucidly from a unison atonal melody and with a Debussian sensitivity to instrumental textures. Jerome Rosen's First is a tougher nut to crack, demanding the kind of 'earnest listener' requested by Paul Fromm on the original sleeve, but rewarding them with a kind of fierce rhapsody, enclosing a still and pensive *Lento tranquillo* – and the playing is beautifully tranquil even if the expression is troubled – and rounding off with twisted, Bartókian counterpoint of compelling grit and determination. The NMSQ make warm and yielding accompanists to Jennie Tourel in the *Stabat mater* (setting a French text by Max Jacob) by Thomson, who also chaired the selection committee for the series. A complete reissue of its work – never made available on CD – would be as heartening and instructive as it is unlikely. On its own terms, however, this tribute to the NMSQ is an indispensable acquisition for anyone interested in new music, or indeed string quartets. **G**



THE RECORDING

New Music String Quartet Complete
Columbia Album Collection
Sony Classical S 19075 92543-2

The stylish Monsieur Entremont

Rob Cowan on an elegant pianist whose French repertoire demands to be heard

Philippe Entremont's playing is habitually a joy to listen to, most especially in music that doesn't call on the full extent of his virtuoso capabilities. This collection includes among its generous contents – which involves numerous repertory duplications – short studies, sonatinas or sonatas by the likes of Beethoven, Kuhlau, Clementi, Dussek, Hasse, CPE and JS Bach, Petzold, Burgmüller and Haydn, many of them recorded in Japan (as are various other pieces included in the set).

That said, **The Complete Piano Solo Recordings** is something of a misnomer given that if you turn to Sony Classical's earlier and equally admirable collection 'Philippe Entremont: The Complete Piano Concerto Recordings' (or, more accurately, 'The Complete Recordings of Works for Piano and Orchestra') you encounter three Rachmaninov Preludes and a Mozart solo Sonata (K282) which are not included in the present set, such are the conceptual limitations of 'original album' presentation. Furthermore, this 'solo' collection includes numerous works where the pianist is heard either with orchestra/chamber ensemble or in duet with another musician. I'm thinking of Ravel and Satie mélodies characterfully sung by Régine Créspin, and beautiful performances of Beethoven and Brahms cello sonatas (Nos 3 and 2 respectively) with Maurice Gendron, rather like a cello-sonata equivalent of the classic Francescatti-Casadesus partnership in violin sonatas (see page 117), readings that parade similar virtues of vibrantly expressed string-playing set against sculpted pianism.

As for the works with orchestra, there's an entertaining disc featuring brilliantly dispatched performances of Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Tune*, Richard Strauss's *Burleske* and Litolff's *Scherzo* with the National Philharmonic under Okko Kamu, and an entertaining presentation of Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals* where Entremont is joined by Gaby Casadesus and a whole range of fine instrumentalists including Yo-Yo Ma. Also with Casadesus, there are Saint-Saëns's *Beethoven Variations* and the Polonaise, Op 77.

So much for 'Entremont with friends'. Regarding the solo material, I turn in the first instance to Haydn, his D major Sonata, HobXVI:37, the excited busyness



of the opening *Allegro con brio* and the shocking contrast with the darkly majestic *Largo e sostenuto* that follows. If you need proof of Entremont's acute sensitivity to dynamics, try the opening *Moderato* of the C sharp minor Sonata, HobXVI:36. Then there's the nimble closing Rondo of Clementi's tiny Sonatina in F, Op 36 No 4 – playing akin to Horowitz in its lightness and wit – or the sheer fun of Beethoven's concise Op 79 Sonata, the opening movement especially.

Entremont's 'complete solo Ravel' (mid-1970s) has already been out on Sony Masterworks but were I to choose a highlight from his Ravel discography, I'd incline more towards a slightly broader version of the *Pavane pour une infante défunte* from 1970, where the music unfolds with warmth and affecting simplicity. As to 'Alborada del gracioso' (from *Miroirs*), again, I'd choose the colour-conscious 1970 option. With Debussy there are two separate CD programmes plus additional single tracks, *Pour le piano* perhaps best illustrating Entremont's natural feel for the music's veiled language and his appreciation of the inherent mystery in, say, the central 'Sarabande', or indeed a finely nuanced account of 'Hommage à Rameau' from *Images Book 1*, which benefits from an impassioned central section.

Entremont's way with Chopin can be both excitable (First Ballade and the

'Revolutionary' Étude, especially in 1967) and structure-conscious (Fourth Ballade); always with him, there are significant ingredients and yet the resultant flavour never brings any one element excessively to the fore. He's too much the artist for that. We're given the Ballades and Scherzos complete, with generous selections of Waltzes and Polonaises. In the 'Raindrop' Prelude he makes much of the chorale-style central section, though everything is kept in proportion. Evidence of this balanced approach can be heard in numerous individual performances. Take his controlled handling of *Jesu, joy of man's desiring* or one of the most familiar of all piano miniatures (the collection is full of tiny, imaginatively turned genre pieces), Dvořák's *Humoresque* in G flat, genuinely *poco lento e grazioso* on this occasion, with finely judged rubato.

There's so much to savour throughout: imagination, invariable agility, chords sometimes desynchronised to expressive effect, a feeling for the overall shape of a phrase, a frequent sense of spontaneous involvement with the score to hand, not to mention refined sensibilities as icing on the cake. And Entremont's place in the late-vintage roster of Sony Classical pianists? To quote just a handful, I'd say less intellectually uncompromising than Serkin or audaciously visceral than Horowitz, more romantically inclined than Casadesus, and light years removed in style from the jackpot-winning wild card Glenn Gould. Let me put it this way: if as an aspiring young pianist I'd have chanced upon much of this repertoire in these particular recordings, and had subsequently been asked how I'd like to interpret that repertoire personally, I may well have answered 'like Philippe Entremont'. The sound quality varies, sometimes closely balanced in CBS/Sony's familiar house style, sometimes more resonant or ambient, but always with presence and clarity. Only the first two CDs are in mono. A very happy recommendation, with excellent notes by Jed Distler. **G**

THE RECORDING

Philippe Entremont

The Complete Piano Solo Recordings
Sony Classical S 11 19075 89944-2



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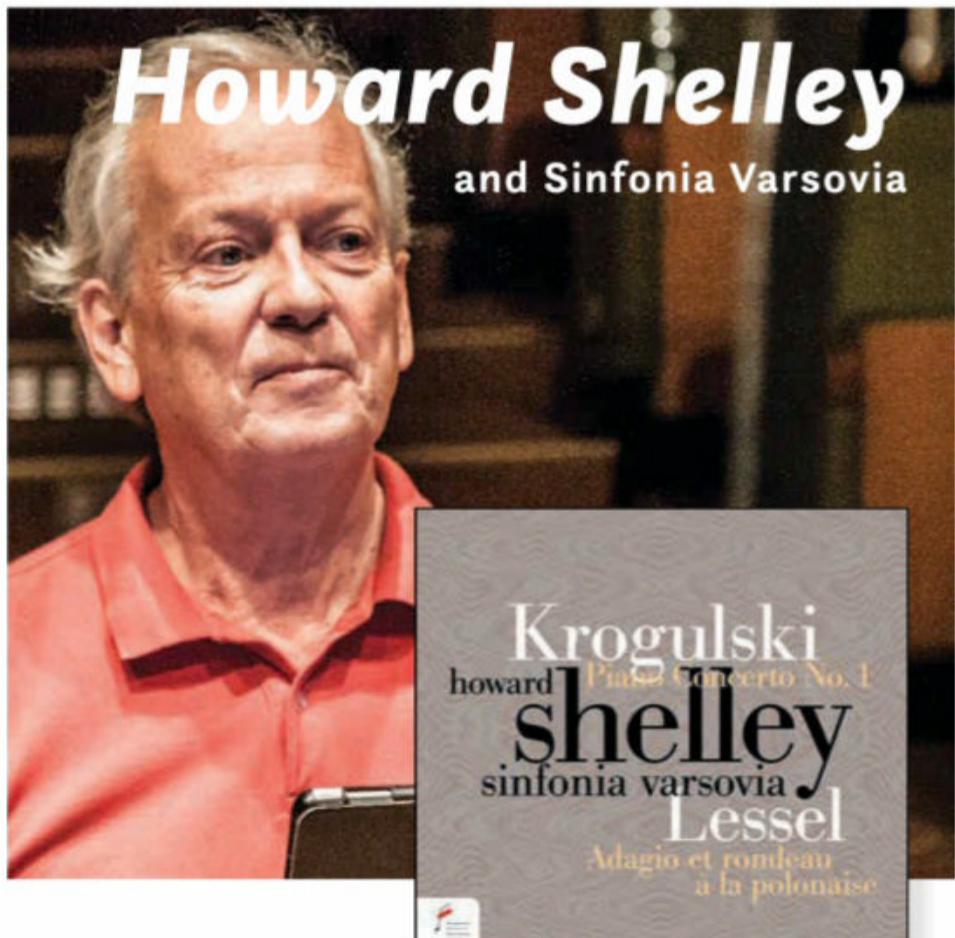
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BOX-SET Round-up

Rob Cowan offers a personal round-up of some worthwhile CD bargains

Having a generous neighbour with a piano certainly helps if you're an aspiring young player with no instrument of your own. Such was the fortune of the Belgian-American pianist **Tedd Joselson**, who lived close to America's legendary concert manager Arthur Judson. Progress was swift; and further along the line, recordings with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, included in RCA's set – all the recordings date from the 1970s – confirmed Joselson's reputation as a talent to watch. The evidence is impressive while rarely raising the roof, with well-considered renditions of Tchaikovsky's B flat and Prokofiev's Second, and Ravel's G major coupled with Prokofiev's Third (both with Eduardo Mata and the Dallas Symphony). When Joselson is on form, he's brilliant: in the super-swift finale of Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata, for example, and virtually the whole of the Ninth, where in addition to tackling the notes with impressive dexterity (witness the second movement) he captures the work's essentially wistful spirit. Sonatas by Liszt and Chopin (his Second), though polished, sound rather ordinary, and 'Baba Yaga' from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* is underpowered. I'd say that Prokofiev was definitely Joselson's bag and the highlights of this collection are the featured sonatas – Nos 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9 – and various pieces from the complete *Visions fugitives*.

I'm writing this column merely a fortnight before the 70th birthday of the fine American pianist **Emanuel Ax**, a formidable musician whose sizeable discography for what is now the Sony Classical group is a model of artistic consistency. Ax's younger contemporary and frequent chamber music collaborator, the cellist **Yo-Yo Ma**, provides the other main prompt for Sony's 21-CD 'Celebration', which brings together digital recordings dating from the 1980s and '90s, often involving, as the key violinist, Isaac Stern, then in his sixties and seventies and sounding rather less robust than he had done 30 or so years earlier with the cellist Leonard Rose and pianist Eugene Istomin. But the artistic integrity on display is impressive, with notable versions of the Beethoven cello sonatas and variations, as well as sonatas by Brahms, Britten, Chopin, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Shostakovich and



Strauss, and chamber works by Dvořák, Fauré, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schumann and Shostakovich. Other collaborators include the violinists Itzhak Perlman and Pamela Frank, Jaime Laredo playing the viola and clarinettist Richard Stoltzman. What we have here is, in effect, a plethora of masterpieces, handsomely presented and well worth visiting, even if your absolute favourite recordings of individual works reside elsewhere. The sound is invariably excellent.

Talking of 'favourite recordings' brings me to the duo sonatas that the violinist **Zino Francescatti** and pianist **Robert Casadesus** set down for Columbia between 1947 and 1961, many of the Beethoven sonatas represented twice. Only the complete cycle from 1958-61 was recorded in stereo, and those are the recordings chosen for reissue by Profil. The performances represent a delicious combination of vibrant violin-playing and finely chiselled pianism, intensely intelligent and often fiery (ie the A minor Sonata, Op 23). The fourth disc, featuring sonatas by Franck, Fauré and Debussy (the latter in excerpt and recorded live), is in mono; and while readers who have already invested in Sony's multi-CD Casadesus collection, or are likely to gravitate towards their forthcoming Francescatti box-set, will have virtually everything that's on offer here, Profil provides good transfers of some exceptional performances.

More French artistry arrives courtesy of Brilliant Classics, which has gathered together a 12-CD collection of **French Piano Concertos**, many of them unfamiliar. The Milhaud trawl includes his Concertos Nos 1-5, recordings from 2005-06 by Michael Korstick under Alun Francis. Gabriel Tacchino's set of the Saint-Saëns concertos dates from the 1970s and has the benefit of excellent support from the Orchestra of Radio Luxembourg under Louis de Froment. Though not as polished as either Stephen Hough (Hyperion) or the vintage Jean-Marie Darré (EMI), they're spirited readings well worth hearing. It falls

to the excellent Klára Würtz to play Ravel's G major (under Theodore Kuchar) rather more seductively than Tedd Joselson, and in fact an exceptional performance by most standards, while François-Joël Thiollier is compelling in the Left Hand Concerto with Antoni Wit conducting. He also performs Fauré's Ballade in F sharp under Antonio de Almeida. The oldest item finds Reynaldo Hahn conducting his own characterful Piano Concerto in E: Magda Tagliaferro is the soloist in a recording from 1937. Other works programmed are by Nadia Boulanger, Cécile Chaminade, Debussy, Jean Françaix, César Franck, Édouard Lalo, Francis Poulenc, Albert Roussel and Germaine Tailleferre. Altogether a most stimulating collection.

Mention of **Theodore Kuchar** brings me to a collection of his purely orchestral recordings with the Janáček Philharmonic and National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine. The repertory covers works by Dvořák and Smetana (including numerous rarities and one of the most dramatic sets of the latter's 'Swedish' tone poems that I have ever encountered), Shostakovich, and a memorable set of the Nielsen symphonies. The collection is completed with a Latin American programme of Moncayo, Romero, Ginastera, Revueltas and so on, all thrillingly performed. A collection that has certainly alerted me to Kuchar's formidable gifts. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Tedd Joselson

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REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



McCormack the magnificent

When it comes to encapsulating sentiment, genuine emotion and maximum vocal presence, as well as projecting poetic content and shaping the curve of a great tune, no one betters tenor John McCormack. In fact, I think it fair to say that Ward Marston's latest McCormack set – his long-awaited completion of the great singer's recorded legacy as expertly transferred to CD (previous volumes are available on Naxos and Marston Records) – will prove one of the glories of recorded vocal art. Let's start with disc 3 tracks 26 and 27, recorded October 11, 1927: two versions of Crouch's touching ballad 'Kathleen Mavourneen'. The first, an unpublished take, is the smoother of the two, with McCormack's singing approximating the style of an opera aria, excepting the tortured words 'it may be for years, and it may be forever', where a sense of theatre takes over. For the marginally broader issued take, McCormack ups the tension with a more acute sense of vocal colour, more prominent accents; and as the narrative unfolds, so the emotion wells to fever pitch. Go to 2'18" and follow the song to the end and you have the very gist of what this great singer is all about, especially from 3'09" and the repetitions of the name 'Mavourneen', and then 'it may be for years, it may be forever' and the soulful closure that follows. Surely no recording of German Lieder or French mélodie, let alone British or American art song, is more affecting. Then there's 'The Star of the County Down', gently ornamented and delivered with such a wistful sense of reverie – I'm thinking in particular of the version recorded on November 30, 1939 (disc 9 track 23). And 'The garden where the prattles grow', another case where contrasting takes were recorded on the same day (December 4, 1930, disc 6 tracks 23 and 24). The song is about a courting couple who eventually marry and have a family: 'two boys just like their mother, and the girl's the image o' me' – and note how, on the issued version, McCormack can barely suppress a chuckle, as if to say, 'Hasn't she drawn the short straw!'

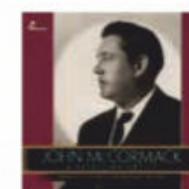
An acoustically recorded selection from the early 1900s (some of them skilfully transferred from primitive wax cylinders) features towards the end of the set and is interesting in that it underlines the significant journey that the singer still had ahead of him. But listening to the earliest electrical recordings, set down just a year or so after the recording horn had become redundant, allows us to rejoice in McCormack's prime. Take two recordings of 'When you and I were young, Maggie' – the 1919 one on track 18 of Naxos 8 112056 and the 1925 one on disc 1 track 19 of the set under review here. The differences are minimal (both are beautifully sung), but the sound of the electrically recorded version is infinitely preferable to its horn-recorded predecessor. It makes you realise that although some singers responded well to the earlier recording process (and McCormack was certainly one of them), the leap of added presence lent by the newer technology – bringing the artist into the room of the listener – was of inestimable value.

What we seem to have here are all of McCormack's electrical recordings save for filmed material such as that included in the 1930 film *Song o' My Heart* (which can be viewed in its entirety on YouTube). In terms of repertoire, Ward's acoustical 11-volume Naxos series includes a good deal more opera than is heard in this later collection. True, there are plenty of songs and ballads there too, but here lighter fare makes up the bulk of the contents. And while it would be idle to downplay the artistry that McCormack brings to thoughtfully arranged traditional songs from Ireland and elsewhere, it's good that the present collection additionally includes unforgettable performances of works by Bach, Bantock, Beethoven (a rare showing for music from *Christus am Ölberge*), Elgar, Handel, Mozart, Parry, Quilter, Rachmaninov, Schubert, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Wagner and (most particularly) Wolf. Two especially memorable tracks are Donaudy's 'Luoghi sereni e cari' and Rachmaninov's 'To the

Children', both of them vivid samplings of what McCormack could achieve through sensitive phrasing and varied tone production. Generally speaking, his vibrato widened with age and his voice darkened in the emotional heat of the moment. While the earlier electrically recorded discs invariably report unalloyed tonal beauty, the later ones speak more as if from the edge of song: as is the case with the Russian bass Chaliapin (also championed by Marston), it's as if you're being neither spoken to nor sung to, but rather encouraged to relish a level of intimate communication that calls on both methods of delivery simultaneously.

Also included are numerous broadcast recordings of variable sound quality hosted by the likes of Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallée and McCormack himself, and a charming encounter between McCormack, Maggie Teyte, Eileen Joyce, Herbert Dannison and Gerald Moore, with musical performances included. As I say, transfers are first-rate, generally superior to those in EMI's four-CD McCormack Icon set (compare the two in 'Oft in the stilly night'). Presentation is also excellent, with tributes from Vincent O'Brien, Edwin Schneider, Gerald Moore and Ernest Newman; and among other written materials, Ward himself contributes a note about the recordings, and there are revealing appreciations by McCormack edition mastermind Jeremy Meehan and Michael Aspinall. Discographical information is copious, too. It should be said, however, that locating individual titles relies on scanning the content pages in the 162-page booklet, which inevitably takes time. The process rather resembles running your eyes across book spines on a bookshelf in search of a particular volume, when suddenly you find something else you want to read even more. And who could complain about that? It's a truly wonderful set.

THE RECORDING



John McCormack:
A Patrician Artist
Marston F 51601-2
www.marstonrecords.com



Irish tenor John McCormack (1884-1945) pictured in 1910

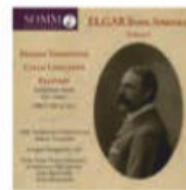
Elgar from America

In late 1940, around the time when McCormack was recording some of his songs and ballads at London's Abbey Road Studios, John Barbirolli was conducting the New York Philharmonic SO in a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto with Gregor Piatigorsky (who never actually made a commercial recording of the work). The tone is characteristically rich, with a fastish vibrato, and if Barbirolli's response to the score would deepen with time (he later recorded it with both André Navarra and, most famously, Jacqueline du Pré), the overall feel of the performance is at the very least dedicated. For me, though, the undoubted highlight of 'Elgar in America' is a little-known broadcast of the *Enigma* Variations featuring Arturo Toscanini and the NBC SO. Although I'm a keen fan of Toscanini's 1935 BBC SO recording (Warner), which features what's probably the most defiant account of 'Nimrod' known to man, this highly impulsive but frequently poetic 1949 account, which is for the most part superbly played, comes a close second. Try the lightning account of Variation 2 ('HDS-P') or the bullishness of Var 4 ('WMB') or 'Nimrod' himself – warmly drawn, uplifting, and tellingly shaped. Maybe 'Dorabella' lacks the elegance she so winningly displays on Toscanini's earlier recording; but best of all is Var 12, 'BGN', the string lines so sensitively negotiated (listen from 0'57"

PHOTOGRAPH: EVERETT COLLECTION/HISTORICAL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

on track 13, especially the ensuing *diminuendo*). The closing Var 14 has nobility to spare, with a marked broadening as Nimrod re-enters. As to the remaining item, Artur Rodzinski conducts the New York Philharmonic SO in a shamelessly cut performance of Elgar's *Falstaff* (1943). The reason for the cuts? Probably lack of available airtime. But then why not choose another work? Especially as *Falstaff* is so tightly organised. Still, the playing is spirited enough in a Straussian sort of way and the sound not bad at all. This is one to consider principally for the sake of the marvellous *Enigma*. Excellent notes by producer Lani Spahr.

THE RECORDING



'Elgar from America, Vol 1'
Piatigorsky vc Barbirolli,
Toscanini, Rodziński cond
Somm © ARIADNE5005

Great soloists

Reference above to André Navarra brings me to a pair of superlative performances that are included among a gathering of 'Great Soloists' as part of the Itter broadcast collection issued by ICA Classics. Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* under Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt are dazzlingly agile, the tone both warm and focused, while Lalo's Cello Concerto enjoys intense solo playing and weighty orchestral support under Jean Martinon. Both performances are with the BBC SO, as is Dvořák's Cello Concerto, where Sir Malcolm Sargent presides over an equally involving account with Zara Nelsova. I was delighted to encounter Monique de la Bruchollerie maximising on wit and keyboard colour in Rachmaninov's *Paganini Rhapsody* (under Sir Eugène Goossens), while Dennis Brain is at his consistent best in Mozart (Second and Fourth Horn Concertos, under Walter Goehr and Paul Sacher respectively) and Strauss (First Concerto, where Sir Adrian Boult conducts). David Oistrakh is captured on an early visit to these shores playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, a brilliant if urbane account with the RPO under Sargent, while the bow is passed to Ida Haendel for the Sibelius Violin Concerto, again with the RPO, though less compellingly conducted by Basil Cameron. Viotti's Violin Concerto No 22 was recorded in Edinburgh in 1953 by Gioconda de Vito and the Rome RAI SO under Fernando Previtali, vivid in detail but less sweetly seductive than Franco Gulli (Rhine Classics). Alfredo Campoli is typically engaging in Lalo's *Symphonie*

espagnole (give or take the odd spot of suspect tuning), but for some reason the opening *tutti* of the Intermezzo is cut. Still, there are more hits than misses here, many more, and the mono sound tells it as it is.

THE RECORDING

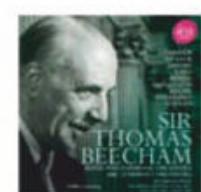


'Great Soloists from the
Richard Itter Archive'
Brain, Haendel, Navarra,
Nelsova, Oistrakh et al
ICA Classics © ICAC5159

More live Beecham

Also sourced from the Itter archive is the second live Sir Thomas Beecham collection from ICA Classics. A charismatic rostrum presence is obvious right from the opening of Chabrier's *Gwendoline* Overture, where Beecham has members of the BBC SO poised on the edges of their seats, or so it seems. Beecham's RPO version of this underrated masterpiece is good, but Chabrier at Maida Vale is even more hair-raising. Likewise Franck's *Le chasseur maudit*, with its barely controlled fury (especially towards the close of the work). This time it's the RPO, which also graces Grétry's elegant ballet suite *Zémire et Azor*. There's rather more charm, twinkle and vivacity here than on Beecham's commercial recording, which certainly applies also to Lalo's G minor Symphony (when compared with his Paris recording – on Warner). Méhul's Symphony in D is an attractive piece (the finale a little like Gluck) in which Beecham encourages his BBC players to make the most of what's on the page. The cloudy, endlessly oscillating, sometimes playful surfaces of Delius's *North Country Sketches* with the RPO bespeak a conductor who genuinely knows what this music is all about. And the Bacchanale from Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* works itself into a frenzy unmatched by any studio version. It's preceded by a gentle 'Danse des prêtresses de Dagon'. Perhaps the highlights of Balakirev's First Symphony are its Scherzo and vigorous, nicely pointed finale. Strauss's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* Suite is very good, though it's cut – and, to be truthful, I miss the elegance and lightness of touch that Fritz Reiner brought to the piece, especially on his RCA Chicago SO recording. Otherwise, this is a most memorable collection in worthy mono sound.

THE RECORDING



Chabrier. Delius. Franck.
Grétry. Strauss, etc
Sir Thomas Beecham cond
ICA Classics © ICAC5158

Classics RECONSIDERED



Charlotte Gardner and **Rob Cowan** revisit the Alban Berg Quartet's 1983 recording of Schubert's String Quintet for which they were joined by cellist Heinrich Schiff



Schubert

String Quintet

Alban Berg Quartet; Heinrich Schiff VC

Warner Classics

New recordings of Schubert's quintet are almost a commonplace these days which, considering the extraordinary individuality and beauty of the music, is not surprising. Writing about the Fitzwilliam/Decca version I said that, good though it was, I was still inclined to put the Amadeus/DG version at the top. I doubt if I would do so still; the playing on this new recording is as fine, and the quality of the sound, in spite of qualifications mentioned below, is just

about the best I can remember. Its remarkable immediacy coupled with unusually vigorous playing give the main section of the Scherzo an almost overpowering effect, and I was quite relieved (as well as a little surprised) that the second repeat was not made. The repeat in the first movement is not made either, but I would not dream of complaining about this; there is no other satisfactory way of getting the first two movements on to one side. The long opening one is beautifully done and I liked, if only for a change, to hear the famous tune for the two cellos played rather coolly,

without sentimentality; as also to hear the second movement without the usual extreme changes of tempo between the three sections. The music floats effortlessly in the outside sections, and the effect is mesmeric. In the finale the players find just the right combination of understatement and swagger. The second cellist's occasional triplet quavers in this movement are not always quite clear, and all through there sometimes seemed just a shade too much of him in the balance. Nevertheless, the sound as a whole is excitingly real; this is a record I can safely recommend.

Roger Fiske (10/83)

Rob Cowan There are two key issues here. Firstly, Heinrich Schiff also recorded the Quintet with the more keenly inflected Hagen Quartet, which alludes to the second issue: the lack, on the current recording, of the first movement's long exposition repeat. 'Heavenly' Schubertian expositions have become something of a tradition of late and here, as with the late B flat Piano Sonata and Great C major Symphony, once you acclimatise yourself to experiencing those elevated four to five minutes for a second time – setting you up for an eventful development section – it's difficult to pass on the option, even with older recordings that have stolen your heart (although this one hasn't – good though it is). So let me put my cards on the table with the view that in this work a sense of scale is as important as eloquence and intimacy.

Charlotte Gardner Yes. In fact, as much as this was a vaguely acceptable omission at the time, I can't help but feel that even someone entirely new to the work would spot that they'd just had their half-finished dinner whisked from under their noses; and

while that's the most glaring unobserved repeat, the Scherzo's unobserved second one serves up a similar 'Whoa, wait, come back!' reaction – so I chuckled to read that RF was 'quite relieved' at this, as well as surprised! The first of my own niggles, meanwhile, is also proportions-based – namely, the balance of parts, and I'll be fascinated to know whether we remain on the same page here as this is more about personal taste. So here goes: in my view, while the quintet should never feel like a bottom-heavy quartet plus outsider, there's still a choice to be made over whether that extra cello creates the effect of a real bass engine room underpinning things, or simply allows for more elaborate textures. I'm in the former camp, so while I can admire Schiff's elegance and subtlety, it's too 'bass-lite' for me.

RC I get your drift here which is maybe a good cue to mention two other significant comparisons, both involving Mstislav Rostropovich, one with the Taneyev Quartet, the other with the Emerson Quartet. The Taneyev version offers

tonal richness though there's no excessive weight – whereas the Emerson option, although admirably transparent, doesn't glow in quite the same way. The other interesting point that this particular comparison unveils relates to tempo. In the first movement the more generalised Schiff and ABQ option, without the repeat, dispatch Schubert's taut arguments in 12'59". Schiff with the Hagen, and with that crucial repeat added in, stretch to 19'45", whereas Rostropovich and the Taneyev weigh in midway at 17'32". But more significant by far is the slow movement where the Taneyev recording stretches to a positively Brucknerian 17'19". As a listener, I took some time to adapt but I did in the end. And the most consistently intense? The Heifetz-Piatigorsky version, a heavenly sprint at 10'27". They just won't let you off the emotional hook.

CG The Taneyev slow movement is heavenly. I'm in awe of the way they manage to sustain that tautness over such time-suspended slowness, and for me this actually makes for a more consistently intense ride than the Heifetz-Piatigorsky



'Spooky' unanimity between Heinrich Schiff and the Alban Berg Quartet in Schubert's late masterpiece

sprint. Back to being all about that bass, though, and while Valentin Erben and Schiff's first prominent duet at bar 60 is sublime, I want to hear more of the second cello earlier, which is what you get with Rostropovich and the Emerson. Likewise, with the second cello's *pianissimo* pizzicato at bar 81 I can admire how barely there Schiff's is, but actually I want to hear some real underpinning. Rostropovich delivers that, via a delectably warm, rounded glow – as does Gautier Capuçon with the Ébène – without coming anywhere close to being a bull in a china shop. This also develops things nicely from the inevitably softer viola pizzicato of bars 60 to 79.

RC I don't want to be made too aware of underpinning. It's more a case of 'overhearing' than hearing, if you get my drift. But there is a moment that only Heifetz and his crew capture with heart-stopping expressiveness. It comes just after the fiery F minor middle section (where to my ears Schiff and the ABQ sound rather laboured), beyond the quiet, halting episode that involves a number of meaningful pauses

for breath: the second violin weeps a *pianissimo* transition, signalling a confessional calm after the storm. Israel Baker is the featured violinist for Heifetz and I've yet to find a version that focuses the moment with more affection. If you want to compare, go to 9'06" on the ABQ recording, then 6'41" on the Heifetz. Baker drifts in on a warming spot of portamento before Heifetz begins his 'speaking' commentary, as only he can. Other versions might offer comfort at the lower end of the spectrum, but at the higher end, no one, surely, compares with Heifetz. Nearest perhaps is Alexander Schneider on the wonderful (and more relaxed) Stern-Tortelier-Casals mono recording. You want underpinning? There you've got it, Council-approved.

CG So we are on different sides of the underpinning fence, then! The Stern-Tortelier-Casals recording is thoroughly underpinned, but – and sorry, because now I'm being really fussy – Casals is a bit too growly for me at points. I'm with you though on Schiff and the ABQ being a bit of a slog to listen to in that slow-movement F minor section. Also, tonally, there's a grating sharpness there to the violin sound, and the whole section is preceded by a rather abrupt-sounding transition (compare it to how organic the Pavel Haas's transition sounds). Gosh, just listen to me moaning ... In fact I think it's time to come up with some praise for poor old Schiff and the ABQ, and indeed there's plenty to genuinely savour, beginning with the naturalness of the acoustic itself, recorded in the Protestant Church of Seon, Switzerland: not too close, and just sonorous enough for the third-movement's *fortissimo* opening to playfully hit the walls. No wonder RF approved.

RC It's worth recalling that, back in September 1992, in the context of reviewing the Emerson's recording, Michael Jameson referred to Schiff and the ABQ's 'long-breathed, motivic splendour' and the ensemble's 'dignified Biedermeier sensibility ... whose command of the Schubert idiom is total.' And while MJ, like us, bemoaned the lack of that sizeable first-movement repeat he admired the augmented ABQ's 'rare and ideal fusion of purpose, intellectual assimilation and musicianship'. Thinking about it, the ABQ's 'Biedermeier sensibility' places the work more in a safe historical context than as part of an urgent 'here and now'. That's a valid viewpoint but surely Schubert's Quintet cannot rest on its laurels, however secure. Like all great music it needs the benefit of constant interpretative renewal. So let's salute the startling contrasts between Heifetz with Piatigorsky, Stern with Casals and the two Rostropovich recordings. Those and others stand to teach us that Schubert's greatest chamber masterwork staunchly defies the notion of a definitive, one-dimensional reading. Therein lies the essence of its greatness.

CG True, this is a masterwork which can't be pigeon-holed into one definitive approach. Plus, to add to my praise for the ABQ and Schiff, their tonal matching and overall blend is so exact that it's actually rather spooky; the result, perhaps, of violinists Günter Pichler and Gerhard Schulz, and viola player Thomas Kakuska, all having Franz Samohyl as one of their principal teachers, and of Erben and Schiff both studying with Kühne and Navarra. Still, I think constant interpretative renewal has to be partnered by constant critical renewal. So the question is, in light of our many niggles with it (and clearly neither of us would pick it as our favourite older reading), does it genuinely deserve the lofty status of 'classic recording'? Perhaps it depends on one's definition of 'classic'. Let's remember, too, that the gold isn't all in the past. In fact it's the Ébène-Capuçon which stands as my own overall desert-island choice: peerless blending which yet celebrates individual colours; a huskily sweet and luminous slow movement; the whole work played with perfectly pitched romance; and indeed the album clearly a labour of love, with the quintet followed by Matthias Goerne singing Ébène cellist Raphaël Merlin's soulful string-quartet arrangements of Schubert Lieder. So, the ABQ and Schiff? There's much to admire. But ... ☺

Books



David Vickers welcomes a dictionary of historical performance practice:

'This is a place to find out where to start research, and not where to find answers to all our practical questions'



Tim Ashley admires a useful guide to The Magic Flute:

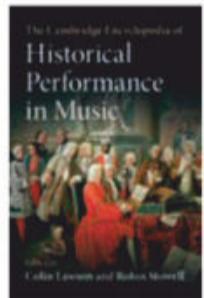
'Nicholas Till contextualises the opera's sexism as a reflection of Masonic male values'

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Historical Performance in Music

Edited by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell

Cambridge University Press, HB, 774pp, £125

ISBN 978-1-107-10808-0



It seems that 'historically informed performance' (what used to be called the dreaded term 'authenticity')

is here to stay – but newcomers seeking a gateway lacked a single-volume reference guide until now. Co-editors Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell have created an A-Z lexicon of historical performance that contains diverse entries contributed by over 100 experts, and their preface expresses hope that dipping into this book will be useful to 'performers, teachers, students, audiences, music-lovers in general and perhaps even scholars'.

A vast array of topics includes composers, usually with a focus on their ideas about performance; issues of performance style and techniques are represented with necessary objectivity and avoid giving polemical advice about how we should (or should not) apply historically informed principles to our own music-making. Users will need to consult the appended bibliographies of 'Further Reading' to discover more specific advice. Essentially, this is a place to find out where to start research, and not where to find answers to all our practical questions.

There are highly useful and digestible explanations of complex core issues such as 'Key character', which shrewdly outlines that different theorists from French and German traditions during the Baroque era contradicted each other completely about the 'meaning' and emotional connotations of F major. There is an admirable definition of the thorny concept of 'Notes inégales' in French music, and a good thumbnail view of the history of the 'Orchestra' and its various layouts. There

is an immensely helpful and lucid overview of 'Pitch', presenting a brilliant summary of the vast amount of research that has been done on the full range of historical pitches preserved across numerous instruments in different countries, from very high A=522 to rather low A=392.

'Scordatura' (alternative tunings of stringed instruments), 'Tactus' (sense of beat), 'Temperament' (systems of tunings) and 'Tempo' are all handily concise introductory essays. Fundamental issues of scholarship and research are set out clearly, such as 'Editing/Editions', 'Urtext' (the marketing-driven problems of the term explained succinctly), and different kinds of 'Manuscripts' – although neat-copy autographs intended as gifts to patrons and performing scores are not mentioned. 'Iconography' lacks specific examples of how it has informed performance practices, and, ironically, has no illustrations.

Many useful entries are penned by respected performers. Robert Levin's 'Improvisation and unwritten performance practices' is entertainingly polemical and covers a wide range of examples within his fluent prose. John Butt writes an erudite summary of the benefits and pitfalls of musical 'Notation', and both editors jointly author an impressively careful summary of factual evidence regarding 'Vibrato' that avoids taking sides intransigently. Richard Wistreich writes magisterial overviews on 'Singing' and 'Performance practice scholarship' (a helpful definition of what historical performance actually is). The history of almost every relevant instrument you can think of (and several more) is set out in masterfully broad texts authored by leading practitioners, including Ashley Solomon ('Flute' and 'Recorder'), Andrew Lawrence-King ('Harp'), Terence Charlston ('Harpsichord' and other keyboard-related topics), Jakob Lindberg ('Lute' and 'Theorbo' – I would have appreciated more on the latter), David Ponsford ('Organ'), Trevor Herbert ('Trombone') and John Wallace ('Trumpet'), and the editors take on their specialisms of 'Clarinet' (Lawson also writes

on the 'Oboe') and 'Violin' (Stowell also deals with several other string instruments). Not all is felicitous – I doubt the usefulness of the 'Double bass' entry informing us that electric bass guitars by Fender, Gibson and Rickenbacker get used a lot in pop music.

Theorists and their works are discussed, as are a veritable host of authors of treatises and instructional methods from medieval times up to Robert Donington. In addition to well-known names (Praetorius, Mattheson, Tosi, Geminiani, Rameau, Quantz), many less familiar yet significant sources are introduced. Uninitiated newcomers will have to spend a lot of time using the general index or skim-reading to discover which entries they should look up – in this respect a compendium rather than an A-Z structure to the contents might have worked better, or perhaps a concordance could have been provided in an appendix for aspiring instrumentalists or singers to more efficiently find every relevant article.

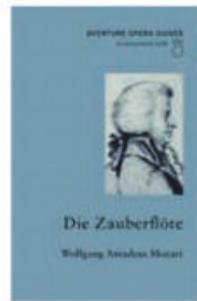
Another imperfection is that vocal genres which do not include instruments are neglected. Those seeking illumination on sacred polyphony or secular madrigals from Josquin to Morley will not find much here. The core strand of entries on performers and period-instrument orchestras that have made seminal contributions over the last half-century opens a sizeable can of worms. Most (but not quite all) entries are excellently written and judiciously selective, but the editorial pantheon of innovative scholar-performers has far too many shocking lacunae: there is nothing on Alan Curtis, Jean-Claude Malgoire, Rinaldo Alessandrini, Hermann Max and Christophe Rousset, and far too few French and Italian period-instrument groups are represented. Vocal ensembles, choirs and chamber groups (such as viol consort) are almost entirely absent. To be fair, this monumental tome could be twice as long and still not have covered everything comprehensively. Notwithstanding a small number of vexing imperfections, this is an impressively authoritative snapshot of the world of historical performance. **David Vickers**



Fritz Wunderlich as Tamino and Hermann Prey as Papageno in a 1964 production of *Die Zauberflöte*

Die Zauberflöte

Overture Opera Guides (series editor Gary Kahn)
Alma Classics, PB, 256pp, £12
ISBN 978-1-847-49805-2



This beautifully written guide to *Die Zauberflöte* examines Mozart's opera primarily as a thing of paradoxes. With its loose-limbed narrative and spectacular dramaturgy, it draws on traditions of popular Viennese theatre not dissimilar to British pantomime, yet it is also, as Nicholas Till reminds us in his study of the work's genesis, 'a symbolic drama with a serious social and spiritual message'. For many years, it was regarded as a noble expression of Enlightenment values, yet it is precisely those values that are nowadays found wanting. Emanuel Schikaneder's libretto is peppered with remarks about women that are sexist to

the point of misogyny, and there is blatant racism in the figure of Monostatos, who is portrayed as evil simply because he is black.

That the work is rooted in Masonic symbolism is well known, though even here we need to proceed with caution, for Freemasonry in late 18th-century Austria was by no means doctrinally consistent. Till explores *Die Zauberflöte* as a product of conflicts between those lodges that saw Freemasonry primarily in terms of scientific rationalism and those which espoused more esoteric beliefs. Mozart ascribed to the latter view, and Till examines the arcane elements that form the work's backbone in fascinating detail, in particular the central antagonism between light and darkness, spirit and matter, with its origins in Gnostic and Zoroastrian dualism. He contextualises the opera's sexism as a reflection of Masonic male values, but also points out the subversive nature of Pamina's voluntary decision to join Tamino in his initiatory trials, which

in Freemasonry itself are an exclusively male preserve. Monostatos, meanwhile, is 'the stereotypical non-European Other who threatens the supposedly superior values of European culture', identified in Mozart's day with the Ottoman threat to the Habsburg empire.

Julian Rushton, in his essay on the score, tacitly agrees with him, linking Monostatos's music with 'the *alla turca* style associated with Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*'. Rushton's examination of the work's stylistic complexities is, as one might expect, marvellously lucid. He analyses the dramatic impact of the score's extreme stylistic range, which embraces Papageno's popular songs at one end to the Queen of the Night's *opera seria* showstoppers at the other, and also emphasises passages where Mozart breaks new ground: Pamina's description of her father carving the flute 'is another of those free, declamatory yet expressive vocal passages that characterise some of the most moving passages in this opera and point most strongly to the operas of the 19th century: Weber, even Wagner'.

Hugo Shirley, meanwhile, impressively surveys the work's performance history in the third essay. *Die Zauberflöte* has never been out of the repertory, though in the 19th century, treatment of both score and text was notably cavalier. Paris first heard it in 1801 as *Les mystères d'Isis*, revamped to include additional music from *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. In Britain it was given, more often than not, in Italian as *Il flauto magico*. Interpretations in the 20th and 21st century have been coloured, inevitably, by the concerns, political as well as aesthetic, of their times. Monostatos, in particular, has provoked contradictory responses on the part of directors, some of whom have rewritten the libretto to eliminate reference to his being black (Nicholas Hytner at ENO in 1988, David McVicar at Covent Garden in 2003), while others have retained the original text in the name of authenticity or contextualisation (Pierre Audi in Amsterdam in 1995 and Salzburg in 2006, Peter Stein at La Scala in 2016).

The guide also includes a new translation by Kenneth Chalmers of Schikaneder's libretto, given absolutely complete and reminding us just how much of the dialogue is nowadays cut, both in the theatre and on disc, often to the detriment of both narrative and psychology. A fascinating and often illuminating study of a complex work, it's well worth reading, whether you're unfamiliar with *Die Zauberflöte* or know the opera backwards. **Tim Ashley**

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Schumann's Second Symphony

Nine decades of recordings reflect changing attitudes to Schumann's Second, finds **Richard Whitehouse**

The mid-19th century is still referred to as one of marking time for the symphony – when composers fought shy of the challenges posed by Beethoven, until Brahms rounded off the long genesis of his First Symphony in 1876. A primary factor in this was the tendency in the early and mid-Romantic eras to conflate abstract evolution with evocative or illustrative elements. Mendelssohn, his teenage First Symphony the only one of his five designated such works with no programmatic intent, is a case in point – as, more ambivalently, is Schumann.

A composer who had hitherto focused on piano cycles of a more or less illustrative nature was unlikely to jettison this approach when tackling the symphonic genre. The *Spring* Symphony, his First, duly combines such aspects with a relaxed take on formal precepts. While the D minor Symphony eschews extramusical conceits, its formal radicalism bewildered listeners and it was extensively overhauled as his Fourth; together with the overtly descriptive *Rhenish* Symphony (the Third), the D minor represents the peak of Schumann's legacy as this appeared to his contemporaries.

In this context the Second Symphony is very much a 'slow burner'. Begun in December 1845, its orchestration occupied Schumann until the following October: a period of emotional depression and creative realignment, as intensive study of counterpoint gave his writing more expressive immediacy but also a textural intricacy too easily mistaken for turgidity. Hence the lukewarm response at its Leipzig premiere, directed by Mendelssohn on November 5, 1846, followed by a century of equivocation concerning its supposed gulf between ambition and attainment.

The post-war era brought an increasing reduction of that gulf, with Schumann's orchestration vindicated as surely as his formal control. The Second Symphony remains music of paradox, not least in its inherently abstract conception that yet quotes or alludes to a greater number of earlier pieces than any comparable work. No longer in doubt is its pivotal place in the evolution of the genre, emphasised by its coming midway between Schubert's Ninth and Bruckner's First in what more accurately describes the symphonic 'impasse' outlined above.

RECORDING DEBUTS

Schumann's Second Symphony made a notable entrance into the electrical era, Hans Pfitzner recording it with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra in 1928 (the Fourth had preceded it by two years). His own composition informed by a mid-Romantic aesthetic, Pfitzner could be wilful in approach (as in his 1933 Beethoven Eighth), but this work finds him content to plough a relatively straight furrow – interventionist to the extent that the *Adagio* evinces a harmonic ambiguity anticipating his own music. Ward Marston's transfer (3/92) is worth seeking out.

The piece was slow to find its way into the UK catalogue and, even having done so, George Enescu's 1947 reading with the London Philharmonic went unreviewed here. Reissued over five decades later (7/00), its virtues are self-evident – witness the Scherzo's pert insouciance and the *Adagio*'s easeful yet never indulgent eloquence. Enescu drives the opening movement (too?) hard, while his cumulative approach to the finale places a premium on ensemble that finds the LPO wanting. Happily, the location and issuing

of an earlier performance from New York allows Enescu's interpretative instincts free rein, in a spellbinding account whose finale builds to a culmination of majestic fervour. Marston does his utmost to open out the sound, and those who already have the four main choices listed here should make this their fifth option.

Among several live performances by Arturo Toscanini, that with the NBC Symphony is the best played and most characteristic, dartingly incisive in the Scherzo, then with the *Adagio* rendered as an impulsive and often uneasy intermezzo. Elsewhere the Italian maestro is in his element as he relishes every opportunity to infuse the four-note 'motto' with a Beethovenian portent that suggests a determined extramusical dimension – war in Europe having begun just 18 months before, with the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbour barely nine months hence.

The piece no doubt struck a similar chord in Dimitri Mitropoulos, his 1940 recording from Minneapolis (Archipel) bringing the expected litany of inspiration and failure. His impulsive if rarely too interventionist manner is better captured in a post-war performance from Vienna: the Philharmonic are a little inert in the opening *Allegro*, then stumble in the Scherzo, but the impulsive surges at the *Adagio*'s climaxes elicit as ecstatic a response as does the final surge towards the light. In the absence of any New York studio account, this is a fitting testament.

The studio recordings that emerged in this period are primarily of historical interest. That by Carl Schuricht was well received (11/52) – Andrew Porter speaking of a 'finely architected performance' which superseded the Enescu – but the Paris Conservatoire forces find much of the



Robert and Clara Schumann in 1847,
as depicted by the Austrian painter and
lithographer Eduard Kaiser (1819-72)

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

going tough and even remastering cannot disguise uncharacteristically lacklustre Decca sound. A 1959 radio broadcast from Stuttgart (Hänsler), meanwhile, elicits far more idiomatic playing for all the monochrome sonics. Three years earlier,

Adrian Boult seems to have set down the first integral Schumann cycle, recorded over four days in August 1956 for Pye-Nixa and the Second (11/57) likely the fastest available at just over 33 minutes. If this were Boult's means of galvanising a distinctly

hard-pressed LPO, it certainly makes for cohesion if little in the way of subtlety.

One version from this period that stands as a notable marker is that by **Leonard Bernstein**, here conducting the Stadium Concerts Symphony Orchestra



King Oscar I of Sweden and Norway, the Second's dedicatee; and George Szell, a doughty champion of the work

of New York – actually the New York Philharmonic during late-night sessions for American Decca, where a need for minimal retakes saw him curb his spontaneous instincts. It is a vivid and cogent reading even so, much praised by AP in a review (1/55) that doubtless raised Bernstein's profile this side of the Atlantic, and arguably preferable to the CBS remake (9/63) where a more generalised expressiveness and self-consciousness of phrasing undercuts any more considered evolution. Two decades on and Bernstein revisited the piece with the Vienna Philharmonic, derived (as was his latter-day practice) from live performances, which preserves that frisson of excitement when first violins launch into overdrive in the Scherzo's coda or the Mahlerian breadth of the *Adagio*. If the outer movements verge on the overbearing, this is hardly to deny the chemistry between conductor and orchestra in having adumbrated so immediate and personal a vision.

THE LIVE CHOICE

BPO / George Szell

Testament M SBT1378

Szell's reputation for removing all trace of spontaneity from his studio recordings has



been overstated, yet this account from Berlin reveals an intuitive response that is only possible in the live context. Compulsive music-making.

The relationship of live performance and studio recording is thrown into sharp relief not least by **Otto Klemperer**, whose account with the New Philharmonia (8/69) has a doggedness and even stolidity suggestive of an orchestra not fully responsive to (or even comprehending?) its conductor's intentions. A live reading from October 1968, however, reinforces Klemperer's view of recording as a preparation for performance: the outer movements generate a magnetic intensity which could only result from that unanimity of purpose born of shared conviction.

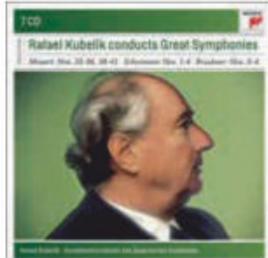
No less revealing of this dichotomy (if such it be) is **George Szell**, whose remake (8/63) was long an interpretative benchmark for this piece. He expounded at length about the veracity of Schumann's scoring, defending it against Mahler's reorchestration and instead thinning out the texture to clarify the woodwind contribution. Such is evident in this studio recording, the Cleveland Orchestra at its

THE CLASSIC CHOICE

Bavarian RSO / Rafael Kubelík

Sony Classical B 88697 88411-2

His Berlin cycle may be technically more secure but Kubelík's later Munich traversal



has greater humanity, allowing his never-indulgent approach freer rein. This 'dark horse' among Schumann cycles has become an acknowledged classic.

imperious best as though an elite force on strategic reconnaissance. Szell's live performance with the Berlin Philharmonic is more accommodating to the music's emotional ebb and flow, with appealing suavity in the Scherzo's Trios and sustained pathos in the *Adagio*. Outer movements lack nothing in formal control or cumulative impetus, making for a thrilling close to Szell's final European concert and one that should be on any shortlist.



THE MODERN ERA

The turn of the 1970s saw several 'big hitters' taking on this piece as part of complete cycles. That by **Georg Solti** still impresses as much for the quality of the Vienna Philharmonic's

playing as for the recorded sound, though its rhythmic immediacy is not balanced by comparable expressive poise. That by **Herbert von Karajan** is reckoned the highlight of his Schumann traversal, yet not even the burnished splendour of the Berlin Philharmonic can offset a certain aloofness in response, eschewing the work's ambiguities by ruling them out of the interpretative equation. That by **Wolfgang Sawallisch** is rightly admired for the unforced naturalness of its direction and similarly unaffected playing from the Dresden Staatskapelle; however, the thought arose on rehearing it that a certain impersonality could well have constrained more individual traits.

One reading of this era to have demonstrably improved with age is that by **Rafael Kubelík**. If the Bavarian Radio Symphony are not quite the equal of the Berlin Philharmonic, with whom Kubelík recorded his first Schumann cycle (8/65), their responsiveness to his distinctly

THE CHAMBER CHOICE

Swedish CO / Thomas Dausgaard

BIS F BIS-SACD1419

Schumann cycles with chamber forces have proliferated over recent years. That from



Thomas Dausgaard and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra is still the finest in its astute combination of textural clarity and expressive immediacy.

personal vision is far more tangible. Listen to the codas of the first or third movements for playing that underscores Kubelík's teasing a reticence and vulnerability even out of Schumann's most resolute statements. Rob Cowan's advocacy of this cycle over the decades was not misplaced.

Not all conductors have tackled Schumann's Second successfully a further time. **Riccardo Muti**'s first traversal with the Philharmonia resulted in a vigorous and unmannered account, with strings a little rough in the Scherzo's main theme but elsewhere (the finale in particular) an uninhibited verve that still makes compulsive listening. Forward two decades and Muti's remake with the Vienna Philharmonic (8/96) brings immaculate playing and sophisticated sound but little in the way of an evolving or perceptive interpretation to justify the venture.

As for **Giuseppe Sinopoli**, his earlier account was determined by a psychological profile of the composer (discussed in his lengthy booklet essay) and results in an interpretation, ranging from sombre gravity to emergent elation, that resembles no other. Would something of this individuality were present in his remake (9/95), with its overtly generalised expression and playing from the Dresden Staatskapelle whose overheated response sounds at best simulated and at worst contrived. Not a reading (or cycle) by which to remember a singular conductor.

Conversely, **Kurt Masur** altered tack notably from his rather staid traversal with the Leipzig Gewandhaus (9/76) when recording them anew with the London Philharmonic. Incisiveness is the key to one of the deftest Scherzos yet realised, then an *Adagio* whose swiftness belies its impact, unfolding with seamless and cumulative intensity (likely recorded in a single take) that holds good throughout the effervescent finale. From a time when 'authentic' and 'chamber' versions were coming into fashion, Masur reaffirms the validity of a full orchestral response.

As too, in his more opulent manner, does **Daniel Barenboim**. His earlier version (4/78) found the Solti-era Chicago Symphony in combative form, making for a powerful while sometimes overbearing account that has not aged well. Without radically altering approach, his remake with the Berlin Staatskapelle brings an appreciably more sensitive response, the richness of its strings offset by limpid woodwind and sonorous brass in a reading which is the highlight of his second cycle: a timely reminder that 'big band' need not equate with blowsy or insensitive.

PHOTOGRAPH: DPA PICTURE ALLIANCE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Thomas Dausgaard provides 'an object lesson in resourcefulness'

OLD INSTRUMENTS, SMALL BANDS

The vogue of period-instrument recordings came and went relatively swiftly. Early exponents such as Derek Solomons and the Authentic Orchestra (10/90) now sound like quaint period pieces, with Roy Goodman and the Hanover Band (3/95) characterful rather than convincing. Roger Norrington recorded the latter two symphonies with his London Classical Players, only tackling the cycle with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony – the Second (3/01) being

a thoughtful reading, whatever his concept of 'pure sound' or the true extent of his adherence to the score.

John Eliot Gardiner nominally takes the palm for an 'authentic' rendering of acute rhythmic clarity and coursing animation, while not quite precluding a more considered response to the music's overly introspective or ambivalent aspects. If, ultimately, his pulsating virtuosity feels too much its own justification,

Philippe Herreweghe's more understated while more probing approach should not be found wanting, abetted by playing of real finesse, with an emphasis on detail that is never intrusive: Schumann the ruminative poet rather than histrionic dramatist.

Nikolaus Harnoncourt opted for the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, with whom he had earlier recorded an incendiary Beethoven cycle. If his Schumann is less striking, this surely lies in the nature of the music rather than any interpretative

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS

1937	New York Philh SO / Enescu
1941	NBC SO / Toscanini
1954	VPO / Mitropoulos
1968	New Philh Orch / Klemperer
1969	VPO / Solti
1969	BPO / Szell
1971	BPO / Karajan
1972	Staatskapelle Dresden / Sawallisch
1977	Philh Orch / Muti
1978	Bavarian RSO / Kubelík
1983	VPO / Sinopoli
1985	VPO / Bernstein
1990	LPO / Masur
1995	COE / Harnoncourt
1996	Champs-Élysées Orch / Herreweghe
1997	Orch Révolutionnaire et Romantique / Gardiner
2003	Staatskapelle Berlin / Barenboim
2005	Swedish CO / Dausgaard
2008	Vienna SO / Luisi
2009	Royal Stockholm PO / Oramo
2010	SWR SO Baden-Baden & Freiburg / Gielen
2010	Robert Schumann Philh / Beermann
2012	WDR SO Cologne / Holliger
2015	Dresden Fest Orch / Bolton
2018	Staatskapelle Dresden / Thielemann

RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)

Opus Kura (M) ② OPK2112/3
Naxos (B) ② 8 110836/7 (8/00)
Orfeo (M) C627 041B (6/05)
Testament (M) SBT1482 (8/13)
Decca (B) ② 448 930-2DF2 (12/70 ^R , 8/99)
Testament (M) SBT1378 (12/05)
DG (B) ② 477 7932GB3 (9/72 ^R , 7/90 ^R)
Warner Classics (M) ② 2564 60759-4 (2/74 ^R , 11/93 ^R)
Warner Classics (B) ② ▶ 371497-2, 097993-2 (2/79 ^R)
Sony Classical (B) ⑦ 88697 88411-2 (10/79 ^R , 7/93 ^R)
DG (F) 410 863-2GH (4/84)
DG (F) 453 049-2GTA2 (11/86 ^R)
Warner Classics (B) 0927 49814-2 (12/91 ^R)
Warner Classics (B) ③ 2564 69928-5 (11/96 ^R)
Harmonia Mundi (M) ② HMG50 8190/91 (9/96 ^R)
Archiv (M) ③ 457 591-2AH3 (6/98)
Warner Classics (M) ② 2564 61179-2 (5/04)
BIS (F) BIS-SACD1519 (5/07)
Orfeo (M) ② C717 102H (9/10)
Sony Classical (F) 88697 43707-2 (9/10)
Hänsler Classic (F) CD93 259
CPO (M) ② CPO777 536-2 (12/10)
Audite (F) AUDITE97 678 (10/14)
Sony Classical (F) 88985 37212-2 (2/17)
Sony Classical (M) ② 19075 94341-2 (7/19)

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Heinz Holliger's Schumann in Cologne displays 'leanness, impact, clarity and creative acumen'

shortcomings. Rhythmic quirks or over-emphases are few in a reading attentive to both those heroic and introspective aspects of the composer's muse. After this, the frequently brash extroversion of Yannick Nézet-Séguin's account with the COE (5/14) becomes overbearing well before its grandstanding peroration.

Smaller ensembles are prominent in later Schumann cycles, that from **Thomas Dausgaard** and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra standing out for its clarity of texture and sharpness of articulation, yet also for its subtlety of phrasing which never sells this music short. Here the lithe energy generated in the outer movements is complemented by the deftness of the Scherzo's Trios and harmonic lumbency of the *Adagio*; Dausgaard's handling of momentum in the finale is an object lesson in resourcefulness. By comparison, the refinement Claudio Abbado (A/13) gets from Orchestra Mozart cannot avoid that encroaching blandness common to other of his late recordings. Robin Ticciati (9/14) secures a more differentiated response from the Scottish CO but his fastidious approach lacks the emotional presence of Dausgaard.

The past decade has brought no slackening in new recordings or interpretative approaches. The Second is a highlight of **Sakari Oramo**'s cycle with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic – an unexpectedly weighty account, not least an *Adagio* whose emotional depth is heightened by unfolding at an unbroken pulse, then a finale whose ultimate elation seems the greater for being so hard-won.

A pity Oramo overrides the metrical consistency of the first movement's final chords, something previously heard on Leopold Stokowski's freewheeling 1950 version (11/02). **Fabio Luisi** gets this just right on his imposing 'central European' version, in which the Vienna Symphony need not fear comparison with any local rival. If there is a failing, it is in his rather dour take on a finale which clinches the formal design but not its expressive trajectory. **Michael Gielen** is occasionally guilty of over-earnestness, though his unerringly conceived account, eloquently played by the SWR Symphony, tangibly integrates all four movements into an unbroken and cumulative unity. A pity this Schumann cycle remained incomplete.

Such unity is not absent from Simon Rattle's version (7/14), yet his self-conscious approach, with its over-attention to detail and polished if low-key response by the Berlin Philharmonic, offsets a firmer recommendation. Preferable are **Frank Beermann** and the Robert Schumann Philharmonie of Chemnitz, using an edition by Joachim Draheim which clarifies various textural ambiguities in a taut but flexible reading that neither skimps on this music's emotional affect nor constricts its inherent dynamism; part of yet another cycle to have fallen under the radar.

Antonio Pappano (10/16) secures a generous response from his Santa Cecilia forces (strings especially) yet there are no revelations here, nor with Michael Tilson Thomas's stylish traversal (11/17) in San Francisco, akin to David Zinman and the Zurich Tonhalle (5/04) in impressing

more as the result of a fruitful long-term association than for genuine insight. More absorbing than either is **Ivor Bolton** and the Dresden Festival Orchestra, its fusion of period astringency and interpretative alacrity rendering Schumann's orchestration (not least his timpani-writing) in a persuasive light. Still in Dresden, **Christian Thielemann** secures burnished playing from the Staatskapelle that, avoiding the wilfulness of his Philharmonia account (1/98), exudes an ambivalence and even agitation Pfitzner would surely have appreciated nine decades before.

This leaves **Heinz Holliger** with the WDR Symphony of Cologne as prime recommendation. Long crucial to his work as composer and conductor, Holliger's Schumann has all one might wish for – the leanness of a chamber orchestra, impact of larger forces, clarity of an authentic approach and creative acumen of one conscious of his role as being more than merely putting musicians through their paces. Some examples from each movement illustrate this: in the first, his emphasis on the *Un poco più vivace* transition (1'54") as it prepares for then motivates the ensuing *Allegro*; in the Scherzo, his consistency of pulse which integrates the Trios (1'39" and 4'15") and underlies the (relative) acceleration into the coda (6'24"); in the *Adagio*, his handling of the spectral interlude (3'57") that links each half while emotionally heightening the latter; and, at 4'00" in the finale, after the movement has reached near-stasis, his winsome underlining of the quotation from Beethoven's song 'Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder' (the last of the cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*) which then makes possible the ultimate affirmation.

Almost 175 years since its completion, Schumann's Second Symphony can, more than ever, be heard as the true embodiment of musical mid-Romanticism, as well as being the salient symphonic achievement from that interregnum stretching between Schubert and Bruckner. **G**

THE ULTIMATE CHOICE

WDR SO Cologne / Heinz Holliger

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Schumann has long been central to Heinz Holliger's creative thinking. His Cologne account – part of the most inclusive overview of Schumann's



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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

Royal Albert Hall, London, BBC Radio 3 & BBC Four

August 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30 September 1, 6, 8

The BBC Proms are currently in full swing, and as always you can hear every Prom on BBC Radio 3. However, we think it's worth reminding you of this month's BBC Four television broadcasts too. The dates are all above, and within those we'll just draw your attention to a few highlights. Prom 40 for instance (August 16, broadcast August 18), for which **Stephen Hough** plays Queen Victoria's own piano in Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No 1 with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under **Adám Fischer**. Also Prom 44 (August 20, broadcast August 24) with its programme of Koechlin, Varèse and Walton from **Simon Rattle** and the London Symphony Orchestra; and Prom 46 (August 22, broadcast August 25) which sees **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla** and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra joined by **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** for Elgar's Cello Concerto. Then our final pointer will be towards the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra's Proms debut at Prom 57 (September 1, broadcast September 6), **Long Yu** conducting them in works to include Mozart's Piano Concerto No 23 with Leeds International Piano

Competition Winner **Eric Lu**, who is making his own Proms debut.

bbc.co.uk/proms

KKL Lucerne, Concert Hall & medici.tv

August 17 in Lucerne, streamed August 24

Switzerland's major Lucerne Festival runs from August 16 to September 15, and happily one of its key concerts is being made available via medici.tv. This sees festival Artistic Director **Riccardo Chailly** conduct the Festival Orchestra in a Russian programme featuring Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3 and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4; and the soloist for the Rachmaninov couldn't be more appropriate because it's **Denis Matsuev**, whom the composer's grandson Alexander Rachmaninov invited to record the composer's works on Rachmaninov's own unusually long Steinway, which is still sits in the composer-pianist's former home on Lake Lucerne.

lucernefestival.ch, medici.tv

Philharmonie, Berlin & Digital Concert Hall

August 23 & 24, September 8

It's a big season opening for the Berliner Philharmoniker this year, because it's finally the moment at which **Kirill Petrenko** stands on the podium as in-post Chief Conductor. So

what better work with which to start than Beethoven's Symphony No 9, with soloists **Marlis Petersen** (2019-20 Artist in Residence), **Elisabeth Kulman**, **Benjamin Bruns** and **Kwangshui Youn** with the Rundfunkchor Berlin. On the first night, the symphony is performed in the orchestra's Philharmonie base, paired with Berg's *Lulu* Suite with Petersen as soloist. Then on the following night the symphony is the stand-alone work in a free open air concert under Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. This month's other live streamed concert then offers something entirely different: **Peter Eötvös** conducting the German premiere of his own *Alhambra* Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No 3 with **Isabelle Faust**, paired with Xenakis's *Shaar* for large string orchestra, and Varese's *Amériques*.

digitalconcerthall.com

Théâtre de Vevey, Vevey & online

August 24-30

Hosted by the Swiss town of Vevey, where pianist Clara Haskil lived from 1942 until her death, the **Clara Haskil Competition** is one of the majors for pianists, and the 2019 jury is correspondingly illustrious, with **Christian Zacharias** as President, and other judges including Aleksandar Madžar, plus the

ARCHIVE COMPETITIONS REVIEW

A pair of young keyboard lions roaring in Moscow and Beijing as they carry off well-deserved gold medals



Two piano competitions

No wonder they clap early: having dispatched Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto, Alexandre Kantorow has reached the halfway point of Brahms's Second with a scorching account of the Scherzo, and the sheer stamina of his enterprise deserves a prize in itself. Winner of both the piano gold medal and the whole Tchaikovsky Competition Grand Prix, the 22-year-old demonstrates not only the audacity of youth but a clear-

sighted vision for both works, and the temperament to carry it off.

Everyone on stage looks dead on their feet, as well they might be, in the midst of three days in June packed with seven finalists and 14 concertos, but the State Academic SO Evgeny Svetlanov are marshalled with a light touch by Vasily Petrenko, who fines down the accompaniment beautifully in the piano-trio central movement of the Tchaikovsky. Kantorow himself is, on the evidence of both this concert and his BIS albums, already the finished article, possessed of a marvellously elfin touch for the Mendelssohnian moments of phantasy in both concertos, as well as the ability to draw both orchestra and audience around him in passages of quiet rapture.

By contrast the 19-year-old Tony Siqi Yun flies by the seat of his pants at points in his prizewinning performance of the

Tchaikovsky First Concerto at the inaugural China International Music Competition in Beijing. He's expertly partnered by the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin who guides without stifling his more rhapsodic flights of fancy. By no means note-perfect in heavy double octaves and inclined to lose the pulse once left to his own devices, Siqi Yun nevertheless deserves the crown, for his carefree abandon when it counts, and for a sense of wonder and spontaneity about Tchaikovsky's novelistic first movement. Listening is a two-way process in any truly musical encounter, and Siqi Yun brings an engaging modesty to the partnership with his vastly more experienced colleagues.

Peter Quantrill

[Watch for free at tch16.medici.tv/en/piano/](http://watchforfreeat.tch16.medici.tv/en/piano/)
www.medici.tv/en/concerts/china-international-music-competition/

Verdi's *Il trovatore* returns to the country in which it's set for a new production at Madrid's Teatro Real**Verdi**

Francisco Negrín has reacted to the still frequent criticism of this opera's libretto as naïve and unsophisticated by staging a straightforward version which concentrates unapologetically on its story. There are no attempts either to

provide extra realism by moving to a more modern setting (Franco's Spain has become popular) or even abandoning naturalism altogether. Believing with justification that fire is a dominant image in the opera – think of Azucena's and Ferrando's narratives of the burnt child, or Manrico's heaven-storming aria 'Di quella pira' – he provides a lit flame onstage the whole time within a unit set of walls and a pillar-cum-stake with fire projection. Actors portraying the child Azucena burned by mistake and her murdered mother appear when they are mentioned in the text. The male chorus of soldiers and gypsies look as if they have been working with fire.

This 'no tricks' approach is backed by especially strong musical contributions from Maria Agresta's Leonora (we're reminded that this demanding role is almost a *bel canto* one) and Ekaterina Semenchuk's Azucena (real singing as opposed to the habitual vocal growling). Maurizio Benini conducts efficiently and unhysterically. Unfortunately on the night streamed there are distracting lapses in the stage action: the sword fighting of Francesco Meli's serviceable Manrico and Ludovic Tézier's disappointing di Luna is almost comical.

Mike Ashman

Available to view for free at operavision.eu until January 5, 2020

composer Thierry Escaich who has written this year's competition commission. You can catch all rounds live and on catch-up (video and audio) via the competition website, and it should make for a good show: Zacharias conducting the Orchestre du Festival du Zermatt in a programme of Mozart piano concertos. Also of interest to readers will be a 'Haskil: le mystère de l'interprète', a DVD film about Haskil to be released by the competition on August 27 (via Louise production), which also includes a CD of unedited Clara Haskil recordings, including one recorded by Charlie Chaplin as she played at his house.

clara-haskil.ch

Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Alberta, Canada & online**August 26 - September 1**

The triennial Banff International String Quartet Competition is open to quartets of all nationalities whose members are all under the age of 35 at the time of the competition; and when previous winners include the Dover Quartet, the 10 quartets who've made it through the preliminary selections know that there's a good deal of international prestige attached to winning, beyond the lure of \$150,000 of cash prizes and Career Development Grants. As for Gramophone readers, this is the competition on this month's pages that UK readers should be watching with special interest, because this one has two from the home team, both of which formed at the Royal College of Music: the 2018 Royal Overseas League Competition winners and current holders of the Guildhall School of Music String Quartet Fellowship, the **Marmen Quartet**, and the charismatic and fast-rising winners of the Royal Philharmonic Society award for Young British String Players, the **Ruisi Quartet**. All rounds will be streamed

via the competition's Facebook page, and we thoroughly recommend tuning in.

banffcentre.ca, en-gb.facebook.com/bisqc/

Leipzig Gewandhaus & Takt1**September 1**

Andris Nelsons opens his second season at the helm of Leipzig's Gewandhausorchester with Bartók's Piano Concerto No 3. That acclaimed Bartók interpreter **Sir András Schiff** is soloist. Debussy's *La mer* follows, before Stravinsky's *The Firebird* ends the concert.

takt1.com

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam & online**September 1**

Amsterdam's Concertgebouw celebrates 25 years of its Sunday morning concert series this month, and its celebratory live-streamed programme from **Antony Hermus** conducting the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest begins in suitably triumphant fashion with Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Verdi's *Il forza del destino* Overture follows, after which comes a selection from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* suite, before Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien* brings things to a frothily upbeat conclusion.

concertgebouw.nl

Gothenburg Concert Hall & GSOplay**September 5**

Santtu-Matias Rouvali opens his third season as the Gothenburg SO's popular Chief Conductor with Shostakovich's Symphony No 5, followed by **Leif Ove Andsnes** the soloist in Grieg's Piano Concerto.

gso.se

Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg & online**August 14, 16, 18 & September 6**

Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie has a rich

programme of live-streamed events this month, beginning with five concerts from its Elbphilharmonie Summer series, three of which are classical: Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* and Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* from the National Youth Orchestra of the USA with mezzo **Joyce DiDonato**; the European Youth Orchestra under **Stéphane Denève**, with a programme to include **Andreas Ottensamer** performing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto; and **Alexander Shelley** conducting the German National Youth Orchestra in a programme featuring Brahms's Symphony No 2 and the *Porgy and Bess* Symphonic Picture for Orchestra by Gershwin arranged by Robert Russell Bennett. Then the headline for September is of course **Alan Gilbert** finally officially stepping into his much-anticipated new role as Chief Conductor of the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, and unsurprisingly he's doing so with a bang: a three-week #KLINGTnachGILBERT or #SOUNDSlikeGILBERT festival consisting of six programmes combining traditional and new repertoire, to give a taste of the musical journey ahead. Opening Night is live streamed, and kicks off with the Symphony No 1 of Hamburg native Brahms, followed by the world premiere of a new work – *Frontispiz für Orchester* – by the NDR's 2019–20 Composer-in-Residence, **Unsuk Chin**. The programme then concludes with three emotionally charged 20th-century works from Gilbert's American homeland: Bernstein's rarely-performed-in-Germany Symphony No 1 *Jeremiah*, Ives's *The Unanswered Question*, and Varèse's visionary *Amériques*. Catch it either on the orchestra's website, its Facebook page, or via the ndr website in cooperation with Arte.

elbphilharmonie.de, facebook.com/elbphilharmonie.hamburg/, ndr.de/eo

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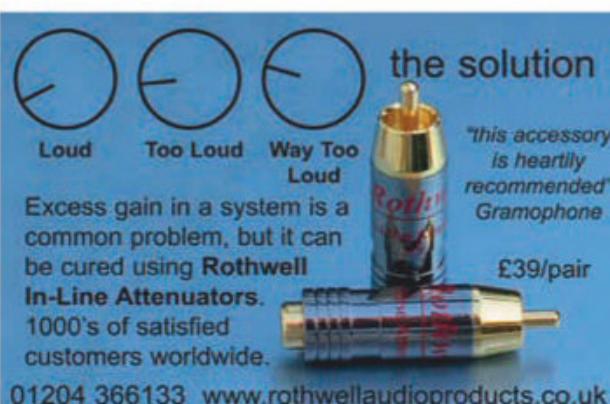
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A well-matched all-in-one system from ATC, a smarter server from Melco and how to tackle classical tagging

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

SEPTEMBER TEST DISCS



Rachel Podger's scintillating *Four Seasons* has already attracted plaudits. It sounds even more striking in DSD versions up to DSD512.



A powerful reading of Copland's Third Symphony by The Orchestra of the Americas, sparkling in this 192kHz/24-bit release from Linn.

From speaker bargains to a reinvented all-in-one

A British brand makes its entry-level range more affordable while another revises a revolutionary product

Although the market for highly affordable hi-fi has contracted more than a little since its past peaks, there's no shortage of equipment designed to tempt new buyers into investing in a first serious system. British speaker manufacturer Wharfedale has been at the forefront of this trend ever since it launched its first Diamond speakers several decades back – the Diamond is now in its 11th generation – and now it's found ways to make its excellent D300 series speakers ①, launched last autumn, even more cost-effective.

Citing the development of 'a number of efficiencies in the production process to enable significant cost reductions to pass on to consumers', the company has reduced the entry-level D310 bookshelf speakers from £159 per pair to £129/pr, the slightly larger D320 from £199/pr to £149/pr and the matching D300C centre speaker for home cinema from £179 to £149. However, the most spectacular saving is on the floorstanding D330 speakers, which launched at £499/pr: you can now buy them at just £349/pr, making them a highly affordable way to get a pair of speakers with good sensitivity, so you don't need a huge amplifier to fill large spaces, and claimed bass extension down to 40Hz (+/-3dB).

Wharfedale has also revived one of its classic designs as part of its Heritage Series. The Linton (£999.95/pr) ② joins the recently launched Denton 85 (£549.95/pr), and is another design first seen in the 1960s and '70s. The new model follows the lead of the 1965 original in being a large three-way standmount model. It uses a 20cm Kevlar cone bass unit, a 13.5cm mid-range driver, also with a Kevlar cone, and a 25mm soft fabric dome tweeter, and



is hand-finished in a choice of real wood veneers – mahogany or walnut. Matching open-frame stands with coordinating veneer panels are available at £279.95, or £1099.95 when bought with the speakers.

Another classic British name launching new products is Cambridge Audio, with an all-new AX range of CD players, amplifiers and receivers designed to slot in beneath its CX and Edge line-ups. Available in Lunar Grey and black, the range kicks off with the very simple AXC25 CD player and AXA25 amplifier at £229 apiece ③. The player has just analogue outputs, while the amp has four analogue ins and an auxiliary input on the front panel, and delivers 25W per channel. Stepping up, the £299 AXC35 CD player adds a coaxial digital input, while the similarly priced AX35 amplifier ups the power to 35W per channel and adds a remote control, display and headphone output.

Unusually, the two receivers in the range are stereo-only, not multichannel. The £349 AXR85 can drive two zones of speakers with its 85Wpc output, and has three analogue ins plus a phono stage input, 3.5mm stereo in and 6.3mm headphone out sockets, built-in Bluetooth and an FM/AM tuner. The £449 AXR100 delivers 100Wpc and adds two optical inputs and one coaxial.

Back to speakers, and PMC has launched 'Signature' versions of its fact.8 and fact.12

floorstanders ④, with technology trickled down from the company's Fenestria flagship model – principally in the crossovers, which now use military-grade boards, hand-selected components and a revised layout to minimise interference – with switching on the rear panel to tailor the bass and treble to the room. In two new finishes, White Silk and Metallic Graphite, the fact.8 Signature is £6995 per pair and the fact.12 Signature £14,995.

Finally this month, a completely revised version of the trendsetting Naim Mu-so all-in one system. Mu-so Second Generation – or Mu-so2 to its friends ⑤ – sells for £1295 and, as well as the extended compatibility of Naim's 'Future Platform', has completely revised audio engineering. A new control interface has additional touch-buttons on the main unit and a new handset, while improved multicore digital signal processing and upgraded speaker drivers co-developed with Focal give the system enhanced sound, including better bass, helped by a 13 per cent increase in cabinet volume. The addition of an HDMI input allows Mu-so2 to be used as a TV sound system, while Chromecast, Spotify, Tidal and Roon-ready status, plus Bluetooth and AirPlay2, make the system remarkably flexible. New grille colours are also available: as well as the standard black, you can choose between Terracotta, Olive and Peacock. ⑥

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

ATC's British-built bargain

Best-known for its studio speakers, the British company makes excellent domestic hi-fi too

ATC's technology originated from the manufacture of drive units for professional applications from studio monitors to PA systems.

Forty-five years on, the company still has a strong presence in the professional field, with an extensive client list including the likes of Air Studios, the BBC, the Royal Opera House and the Wigmore Hall in London, and other venues as far-flung as the Sydney Opera House, the Shanghai Opera and Japan's Asahi and Fuji TV companies. It also has an impressive following among hi-fi enthusiasts, not least because, 'if it's good enough for the studios ...'

You might be forgiven for thinking all this comes with an inevitably jaw-dropping price, but an intriguing contact from ATC led to this review: 'Would you like to review our entry-level system?' With some trepidation I asked the price – trying as I do to keep the cost of the products reviewed in these pages somewhere within the realms of reality – and was pleasantly surprised to discover that the proposed set-up, combining the new CD2 CD player and SIA2-100 integrated amplifier, plus the long-established SCM7 speakers, comes with a combined price tag of just short of £5000. Even before I started listening, that sounded to me like rather good value.

Not only that, but the components of the system are also fairly compact, which will find favour with those tight for space or who simply do not want their room to be dominated by hi-fi equipment. The £1500 CD player and £2500 amplifier come in a slightly unusual 'two-thirds' 31.5cm width, while the speakers stand just 30cm tall, sell for £875 a pair in a choice of finishes

ATC CD2

Type CD player

Price £1500

Analogue outputs RCA line and balanced XLR

Digital outputs Optical and coaxial

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (WxHxD) 31.5x7.7x31.5cm

ATC SIA2-100

Type Integrated amplifier

Price £2500

Analogue inputs 2xRCA line, one with 3.5mm front panel option

Digital inputs USB Type B, optical and coaxial

Analogue outputs One pair of speakers, headphones, line out

Output power 100W per channel into 8 ohms

Accessories supplied Remote handset



Dimensions (WxHxD) 31.5x11.3x31.5cm

ATC SCM7

Type Two-way standmount speakers

Price £875/pr

Drive units 25mm soft-dome tweeter, 12.5cm mid/bass

Sensitivity 84dB/W/m

Frequency response (-6dB) 60Hz-22kHz

Finishes Cherry and black ash veneer, white

Accessories supplied Metal mesh grilles

Dimensions (HxWxD) 30x17.4x21.5cm

atcloudspeakers.co.uk

and are the current version of a long-running ATC design. The whole of this system is handmade in the UK, at ATC's rural location in Stroud, Gloucestershire, making this one of a select few British hi-fi companies not to have fallen into overseas ownership or, at the very least, outsourced manufacturing to lower-cost countries.

The CD player here is pretty much a 'what it says on the tin' product. It's built around a TEAC CD transport and a 32-bit DAC from AKM, and is designed purely to play CDs, with no digital inputs, streaming or anything else. Outputs are fed by a Class A buffer stage of in-house design – like the rest of the player – and are available on either balanced XLRs or conventional

RCA sockets, ATC saying that, while the player was developed as an obvious partner for the SIA2-100 amplifier, it's also designed as a CD source for use beyond the company's range if required. To that end the player also has digital outputs on both optical and coaxial connectors.

As you might expect, given this simplicity of function, the player's front-panel controls aren't exactly complex: you get play/stop, skip forwards/backwards and an eject button, ranged below an equally simple display, while over at the other end of the fascia is the on/standby switch. The functionality is expanded a bit by the system control handset supplied with both player and amplifier, which adds direct

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The ATC is a pretty complete system but you could add on these extras ...

ACER C20-820

This Acer C20-820 all-in-one computer will work well with the SIA-820's USB Type B input for music.

**STAX 300**

The Stax 300 stand from Blok would make a fine support for the electronics, in finishes to match the speakers.



numerical track selection, repeat functions and a display dimmer. It's all basic stuff, agreed – but what more do you need?

The SIA2-100 amplifier stands a little more than 50 per cent taller than the player, though in the same 31.5cm² footprint, and as you might expect from the model designation delivers 100W per channel from its in-house-designed discrete MOSFET output stage. Like the player, it uses an AKM 32-bit DAC for digital sources, and in addition to the usual coaxial and optical inputs has a USB Type B asynchronous input to enable it to be used with a computer. The optical input supports sampling rates up to 96kHz/24 bit, the coaxial extends this to 192kHz, and the USB to 384kHz/32 bit and DSD256/11.2MHz, at least when the amplifier is used with an up-to-date Windows computer with the downloadable driver installed. Mac OS X computers need no driver but are limited to DSD128.

The proposed set-up came with a combined price tag of just short of £5000 – even before I started listening, that sounded like good value

Two sets of line analogue inputs are provided, one of these duplicated on a front-panel 3.5mm stereo socket; and, in addition to its speaker outputs, the SIA2-100 has a set of analogue line-outs and a 6.3mm headphone socket driven by its own amplifier with a discrete output stage. With a design this simple, again there's not much else to show on the front panel beyond a standby button, a (rather stylish) volume control and a single button to select inputs. This does give the amplifier, while compact, quite a bluff and purposeful look, heightened by a slender display panel matching that of the player.

The SCM7 speakers may have been around a good while but they still look stylish and superbly put-together, whether in cherry or black ash veneer, or satin black or white, with the curve-sided cabinets of laminated, braced construction for rigidity and damping, and perforated metal grilles

supplied. The drivers are of ATC's own design, the 25mm soft-dome tweeter having an alloy waveguide to control dispersion and the 12.5cm mid/bass unit having an integral version of the company's famous soft mid-range dome. Coils are wound in-house, too, and the larger driver has a hefty optimised motor assembly, this – and those substantial cabinets – playing a part in the all-up mass of the speakers. They may be tiny but they still weigh 7.5kg apiece.

PERFORMANCE

In accordance with ATC's recommendations, the SCM7 speakers were set up on stands well clear of rear and side walls, and angled in towards the listening position. Positioning will of course vary according to the room in which they're used, but I found a location about a metre in from boundaries and a set-up where I could just see the outer sides of the speakers when seated to listen, to have the best sonic balance and image focus.

Balance and focus are just what this system has, whether playing CDs or streaming music via a computer – or, as in this case, from the Melco N100 also reviewed this month as well as my usual Mac mini. What's perhaps even more surprising is that the SCM7 speakers, driven by the SIA2-100 amplifier, deliver not just fine detail and a solid stereo image but also powerful bass way beyond what one might expect from enclosures so small. There's real texture and conviction down there, too, making orchestral double basses and the left hand of a pianist equally striking.

Of course, the system has its limitations, and if you have a larger room you might find some bigger speakers will do a better job of driving the bass in particular – the amplifier will be more than up to the job. But if you want to keep things neat and compact, and don't want to attempt neighbour-annoying volume levels, the ATC system will fill most domestic spaces with music in a very attractive fashion.

Above all, it's the integration of this set-up that's its most appealing aspect. The drivers in the SCM7 work together seamlessly, the amplifier has more than enough power, control and definition to ensure they behave themselves without holding back on musical flow and even the

Or you could try ...

You'll have to work quite hard to find systems similar to the ATC from British manufacturers, as few these days make both electronics and speakers.

Linn Selekt DSM

One alternative, albeit in a different form, would be Linn's Selekt DSM all-in-one system, available with built-in amplification, used with a pair of the company's Majik 109 standmount speakers. Or you could go for a bigger sound with a pair of the Majik 140 floorstanders. See linn.co.uk for more details.

**Focal Aria 906 speakers**

Naim stopped making speakers some time back but its partner company, Focal, still has an attractive range of options to use with the Salisbury manufacturer's electronics. The Aria 906 speakers, for example, would work extremely well with Naim's Uniti Nova all-in-one system, creating a set-up with all the flexibility of the ATC – and more – for about the same price. See naimaudio.com and focal.com for more information.

**Rotel CD11 CD player and A11 amplifier**

The latest additions to the Rotel range – the CD11 CD player and A11 amplifier – provide an affordable purist system, the perfect complement to the 600 series speakers from owner Bowers & Wilkins. Combine those two components with a pair of 606 speakers and you have an excellent set-up for well under £2000. See rotel.com and bowerswilkins.com for more.



CD player makes a very strong case for the continued existence of the silver disc.

Buy it for its solidity, its style or even the 'all made in Britain' thing: however you look at this ATC system, it's remarkable value for money.

● REVIEW MELCO N100

Server with a stylish twist

The entry-level music library server/player from Japan's audio storage experts has a trick up its sleeve

In the five years since the Melco brand first appeared on the audio stage, the company has established itself as a go-to solution for those wanting to stream their music from something other than a computer or multi-purpose network-attached storage device. Back in 2014 the audiophile Melco N1 music system was launched by the Japanese storage company Buffalo, itself a subsidiary of Melco Holdings – and if that isn't already confusing enough, Melco started out back in 1975 as an audio equipment manufacturer before moving into the computer equipment market in 1981, taking the Buffalo name from one of its original computer products, a printer memory buffer.

The new software is designed for classical music and offers an exemplary level of 'deep-diving' into the detail

The audio product was thus a logical move, Melco having both the audio know-how and the hard-drive technology to build equipment well suited to the needs of music serving, where typically content is written once to a drive and then needs to be read many times, sometimes simultaneously by several clients. The initial Melco offering remains essentially unchanged: a storage solution with drives optimised for music, and with a networking implementation able to isolate an attached network music player from the ill effects of everything else happening on the home network.

In recent times, though, there's been a subtle shift in the thinking at Melco. While that isolated network connection is still very much part of the offering – all the company's machines have two Ethernet ports, one marked 'LAN' for the network and the other as direct feed for a network music player, lacking even the usual Ethernet indicator LEDs in the quest for interference suppression – there's a new emphasis in the use of the Melco devices as 'music transports' in their own right, designed to be used straight into a digital-to-analogue converter via a USB output.

That's the configuration of the most affordable Melco model, the new N100, which sells for £1800 and has been launched alongside a flagship two-box

combination, the £6750 N10, which has a separate offboard linear power supply. The N100 shares with that model newly designed 'half-width' casework, with matching expansion units available in the form of the D100 CD Loader, used for ripping discs for storage, and the E100 expansion drive, to supplement the 2TB of internal storage of the N100.

Like all Melco products, the N100 is designed from scratch as a pure audio device, containing no standard IT or PC parts – everything is custom-designed in-house – and with an eye to ease of set-up and use. Using the same internal architecture as the company's N1 series 'full size' digital music library, including Melco's HS-S2 (Highly Stable Storage System) anti-vibration system, it's a fanless design, built on a 2mm sheet-steel chassis and with aluminium front and top plates. It can be controlled from the front panel or over the network using a smartphone or tablet running a control app: at the time of writing the much-promised Melco App was still very much 'forthcoming' but third-party UPnP apps such as Linn's Kinsky, Bubble UPnP and others will do the job very nicely for now.

It supports file formats all the way up to 384kHz/32 bit and Octo DSD (or DSD512, with its 11.2MHz sampling rate), and content can be loaded on to the N100 using 'drag and drop' on a computer on the same network or from USB storage, for which ports are provided front and rear. You can even, should you wish, use a computer-type USB CD drive to rip discs to it, and connect conventional USB storage to the ports to expand or back up the internal storage.

PERFORMANCE

The review unit was the first black sample of the N100 to be released – but that was far from the only remarkable thing about this little unit, which is just 21.5cm wide, stands a shade over 6cm tall and is a featherweight 3kg. The N100 can serve content to external devices using Twonky Server 8.5 and even offer direct music downloads from online retailers – at the moment only highresaudio.com, with others on the way – but that's standard Melco fare. What was new on the review sample was the provision of the company's Melco Intelligent Music Library software,



MELCO N100

Type Digital media library

Price £1800

Hard drive capacity 2TB HDD

Connectivity 'LAN' and 'Player' Ethernet ports, 3xUSB3.0 (two rear, one front) for storage, USB audio, etc

Control Front-panel touchscreen or smartphone/tablet apps

Accessories supplied SongKong and MinimServer software (installed, activated online), power supply

Dimensions (WxHxD) 21.5x6.1x26.9cm
melco-audio.com

launched at the 2019 High End Show in Munich. This is designed to give easy and accurate music cataloguing and browsing tailored to specific musical genres, including a set of parameters especially designed for classical music and offering an exemplary level of 'deep-diving' into the detail of music stored on the N100.

There's so much to say about this system that I'm taking the unusual step of devoting this month's Audio Essay to the problem of tagging classical music and how the Melco software addresses it. Suffice it to say here, the system offers remarkable granularity – to use the currently fashionable term – in exploring even large libraries of music.

And the sound? Well, regular readers will know that in the past I've been less than convinced with what the Melcos offer when used as a server for network music players; but then I run a highly optimised network for music with optical isolation. However, 'breaking' my network by going back to plugging everything into my internet provider's router, then inserting the Melco between network and player, showed definite improvements in focus and general clarity with the Melco in harness, thus making the music considerably more interesting and involving.

The same goes when using the Melco's USB output into a variety of DACs, in place of a computer: there's a graininess with a standard computer that's entirely absent with the N100 and it's clear that the digital feed is cleaner, with less noise. Used this way, even budget DACs of the likes of the Meridian Explorer2 and the Chord Mojo have considerably more sparkle and dynamics, showing the value of a decent single-purpose digital 'transport' in a system such as this. 

ESSAY

Tag-wrestling is no fun



How it works: getting the music and the metadata on to the Melco

We've been here before. From iTunes – remember that? – onwards, computer-based music storage and playback have been based around the simple idea of the pop album or single: one artist, one album title, one track name. Based in a world where a track isn't a track but a 'song', and where hardly anyone plays an album all the way through any more, that doesn't place too much stress on the metadata tagging systems used to identify pieces of music.

In fact, just four pieces of data will cover it: artist, album, track number, track title, and you're done. You can search on any of those text fields and if you want to play a whole album the tracks will appear in the right order – well, as long as track 1 is track '01', track 2 '02' and so on (otherwise some systems will play track 1, then tracks 10-19, before getting to track 2).

The first time you come across an album that doesn't conform to that single-artist norm, you see how poorly this simple approach serves real-world music listening. Faced with a compilation, in which every track is by a different artist, some indexing systems will see each track as a separate album by that artist, unless a box is ticked in the metadata to indicate that the album is a compilation – and even then the performer is likely to be rendered as some variation on 'various artists', which is hardly conducive to accurate search.

Getting your music on to hard disk storage is easy – the problems start when you want to find it again. One company thinks it has a solution

The problem grows when each 'song' is a movement of a symphony or one aria in an opera or oratorio, and it is exacerbated when that opera has different performers on various tracks. Meanwhile, albums containing works by different composers bring their own problem, unless you can remember that, say, the Bruch First Violin Concerto is actually on an album whose headline title is Bach Violin Concertos.

It's no surprise that those of us with large music collections on servers have got quite adept at using tag editing software, such as the excellent Mp3tag (from mp3tag.de), which edits a lot more than tags on MP3 files, is free (though donations are encouraged) and works on both Windows and OS X computers. With this you can cure most tagging problems, although occasionally anomalies occur: I must have spent a day on a near-forensic examination of why one track from the middle of an album refused to join up with its teammates and insisted on appearing as a stand-alone one-track album! The answer, by the way, was an errant accent on the name of one performer buried deep in an extensive list. There are times when tag-wrestling is no fun.

A track isn't a track but a 'song' – and hardly anyone plays an album all the way through any more

Yes, there are programs designed to rationalise your library by improving tagging. I've used and recommended Bliss ([blissdq.com](http://blisshq.com)) in the past, while the Roon ecosystem (roonlabs.com) does a very good job of sorting the music you have and presenting it in a more logical and appealing fashion, but requires a subscription and compatible player hardware.

All of which explains why I am intrigued by the new Melco Intelligent Music Library software installed on the company's N100, reviewed opposite. The result of a long development process involving the Japanese hardware company and the developers of the SongKong music tagger (jthink.net/songkong) and music server software MinimServer (minimserver.com), this package, running on the Melco

music library devices, aims to rationalise the differences between various kinds of music and present extended data – and thus improve search capability.

The unit I received was hot from the software developers' keyboards and immediately showed what could be done with the new package. You get a choice of three modes – for classical music, rock/pop and jazz – and, after loading a range of music on to the N100 and using the menu to rescan the content, the advantages of the Melco approach when compared to conventional tagging and serving became clearly apparent.

For example, you get extended search fields including 'work', 'orchestra', 'ensemble' and 'conductor', and the presence of that 'work' field shows another aspect of the set-up. Effectively the Melco system breaks the limits of the albums on your system, so no longer is that Bruch hidden behind the Bach: the library software sees your music in terms of works, not the (sometimes seemingly random) combinations record company programmers create to fill up the running time of a CD.

That alone creates a much smoother browsing experience, as does the ability to move between all the works of a composer, performer or ensemble. Much the same approach, by the way, will find favour with listeners to jazz, in which different tracks on an album may have a variety of combinations of sidemen performing with the principal artist. Hear a track with a drumming or bass line you like and you can go off and search for other music within your collection featuring that musician, just as you could hear a soloist in a classical work and perform the same search. And so musical journeys begin.

Talking to Melco's Alan Ainslie, who has been instrumental in the development of the Intelligent Music Library, I ventured that the only drawback was the need to set the musical genre preset – not a problem for the purely classical listener but requiring some attention for those of us with mixed music libraries. It would be useful, I suggested, if the software could detect the kind of music playing and switch its parameters automatically. His knowing smile spoke volumes. 

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NOTES & LETTERS

Lorin Maazel in Cleveland • Neglected American symphonists • Alan Hovhaness

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Missed Maazel ...

I have been reading *Gramophone* for more than 60 years and always find a lot to interest me or even to argue with. Clearly we can't all have the same views but I was amazed to read an article about the Cleveland Orchestra (June, page 14) which contained no reference to Lorin Maazel who was Music Director for 10 years from 1972.

I realise that, with many reviewers, Maazel has become a controversial figure but he is by any standards one of the foremost conductors of the 20th century and, in my view, vastly more important than Dohnányi or Welser-Möst.

*Daniel Chapchal
Fetcham, Surrey*

... not once but twice!

Much of the article on the Cleveland Orchestra was devoted to George Szell's quarter century as Music Director and also to the two years immediately following him when Boulez took over.

There then followed two sizeable paragraphs covering the Dohnányi period (18 years) and the ongoing Welser-Möst period (17 years and counting, with at least three more years to come).

In my music room, I have a framed picture of the missing conductor who filled the gap between Boulez and Dohnányi. It bears the words: 'The Maazel Years: A Decade of Excellence'. And yet there is no reference to him.

I recognise that not everyone shares my view that Lorin Maazel was one of the supreme conductors of the second half of the 20th century but, five years after his death, surely he can't have been whitewashed from history already?

Charles Mozley, by email

Andrew Mellor writes: These 'Orchestral Insights' are not intended to be fully comprehensive historical timelines and there are always more music directors than we have space for. On this occasion, I opted for those whose tenures lasted for more than a decade and thus who made a discernible difference to repertoire and/or sound culture.

Don't forget Samuel Jones ...
In Gerard Schwarz's 'The hidden giants of American music' (July, page 18), I was a little disappointed not to see anything

Letter of the Month



Alan Hovhaness, a prolific composer with 67 symphonies to his name - why aren't more of them heard?

Alan Hovhaness's neglected symphonies

I couldn't agree more with July's Editorial Comment (prompted by Gerard Schwarz's article on neglected American symphonies). Martin Cullingford mentions the composers Howard Hanson, Paul Creston and Alan Hovhaness, and I would like to add those of Roy Harris and William Schuman to name two, all shamefully missing from our concert halls.

In particular, I have been campaigning for Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) who has written more numbered symphonies than nearly any

other composer – 67 no less. I have some 25 or more in my collection.

Over the last few years I have tried to flag up the lack of British and American symphonies at the BBC Proms at the end-of-season pre-Prom talk, but it seems to fall on deaf ears.

Perhaps the recordings (forthcoming and already available) by Gerard Schwarz will help to redress the balance of these rarely heard yet unquestionably great works.

*Mike Morfey
London SW16*

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about Samuel Jones or Stephen Albert. I have an excellent recording of Jones's Symphony No 3 and Albert's Symphony No 2 coupled with my favourite recording of Walter Piston's Sixth all on BIS, with Lance Friedel conducting the LSO.

*Robert M Stumpf II
Ocala, FL, USA*

... but at least Hanson is there!

I would certainly endorse Mr Schwarz's plea for more performances of many of the great American symphonies of the mid-20th century. I have loved the Third Symphony by Howard Hanson since I purchased the Mercury LP back in the

1960s with the composer conducting the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra. Last month I spent some weeks driving through some of the most beautiful countryside in the States. The wonderful *andante tranquillo* second movement was constantly buzzing round my head. Why is this music never heard at the BBC Proms? Part of the composer's Symphony No 2, *Romantic*, is actually used towards the close of the classic film *Alien*. Hanson was undoubtedly influenced by the great example of Sibelius and his time must surely come.

*Peter Frankland
Bury, Greater Manchester*

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OBITUARIES

A pioneering Dutch cellist, and the founder of a major US label

ANNER BYLSMA

Cellist

Born February 17, 1934

Died July 25, 2019



One of the great pioneering figures in historically informed performance practice of cello repertoire has died aged 85. Born in The Hague, Anner Bylsma studied at the city's Royal Conservatory, winning the Prix d'Excellence in 1957. Two years later he took First Prize in the Pablo Casals Competition in Mexico. He played in the Dutch National Orchestra and later, in 1962, joined the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, serving as Principal Cello for six years. He would perform with Frans Brüggen and Gustav Leonhardt, and later with his wife, the violinist Vera Beths, and the viola player Jürgen Kussmaul who collectively formed the core of a flexible string group called L'Archibudelli. He also played with the Smithsonian Chamber Players.

Bach's Six Cello Suites became a major focus of Bylsma's musical life. He wrote a study of them in 1998 called *Bach, the Fencing Master* and he recorded them twice – first for RCA in 1979 and then in 1992 for Sony Classical's Vivarte label. Of the 1979 set, *Gramophone*'s Nicholas Anderson wrote: 'These were for me, and probably for many readers, revelatory performances, as significant a landmark, though for different reasons, as those of Casals were in the mid- to late-1930s.' Anderson later commented of the 1992 recording, made on a Stradivarius cello: 'Here is an artist who is not afraid to express himself both individually and intensely and who understands – indeed seems to feel – the graceful contours of these superlative pieces with acute sensibility.'

Bylsma was a musician who was admired by cellists of all interpretative hues, and listened to as attentively by practitioners of the 'modern style' as by those who aimed for a more 'authentic approach'. In an interview with Lindsay Kemp in *Gramophone*'s March 1995 issue, Bylsma said: 'An interviewer once asked me, "What is authentic?", and I said it is when you hear someone play a piece that you know extremely well and it suddenly appears still more beautiful than it was.'

One thing must be true of all music, and that is that it's alive, that you are taken away from your sorrows by it. That's what it's all about.'

JACK RENNER

Founder and Chief Recording Engineer, Telarc

Born April 13, 1935

Died June 20, 2019



Telarc's Jack Renner has died at the age of 84 following a battle with cancer. A trumpeter from the age of 10, he studied at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He worked as a professional trumpeter before turning his talents to recording, with notable success. His recording philosophy was to reproduce what he described as the 'best seat in the house'. He also taught audio recording for three decades at the Cleveland Institute of Music, which awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Musical Arts in 1997.

In 1977, with Robert Woods, Renner founded Telarc, based in Cleveland, Ohio. The company built its reputation on its audiophile approach, capturing the work of ensembles like the Cincinnati Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony and, later, the Vienna Philharmonic. It was an approach that secured it numerous Grammy nominations and awards (Renner won Best Engineered Classical Album 22 times) and *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year in 2004, as well as *Gramophone*'s Choral Award in 1988 for the Robert Shaw recording of Verdi's Requiem; 'To clinch Telarc's superiority, they have the most exciting, immediate recording of a chorus I have yet encountered in this work,' wrote Alan Blyth at the time of the recording's release. Telarc was the first label to sign the young Lang Lang, whose 2001 BBC Proms concert – Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto and solo works by Scriabin – was his debut release.

Telarc released more than 1200 recordings and would earn the gratitude of audiophiles and music lovers the world over for the astounding immediacy of the company's recorded sound, achieved through the work of Renner and his fellow engineer Michael Bishop.

NEXT MONTH OCTOBER 2019



Christian Tetzlaff records two great violin concertos

As he returns to the concertos of Beethoven and Sibelius, the Gramophone Award-winning violinist talks to James Jolly about the new musical balance in his life

Stanford's operas

His work as an opera composer, not to mention as a writer of orchestral and chamber music, is finally being recognised, says Stanford scholar Jeremy Dibble

Collection: Carnival of the Animals

Which recording of Saint-Saëns's witty portraits is the one to own?

Jeremy Nicholas investigates

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Jim Maxwell

The maestro of Australian cricket broadcasting on singing, speaking, training and listening

The first record I ever owned as a boy was 'Last Date' by the pianist Floyd Cramer. I was so keen on getting records that I went down to the radio station in Sydney, and asked if they had any spare records. They gave me a 45rpm of 'I want to walk you home' by Fats Domino, and I wore that out. In the 1950s and '60s there was a lot of talk radio in Australia, no Classic FM. So my parents bought me a gramophone when I was 11 and signed me up to the Concert Hall Record Club. A disc would arrive every month: Dvořák's *New World*, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* and Mozart's *Jupiter*. My parents' efforts stuck with me, and at the age of 14 I started buying LPs myself.

I never learned to read music, but my parents bought me a guitar, which I started learning. Then cricket took over, and the guitar sat at home and eventually warped. I saw my first opera in 1972. I was 22 years old, and I had been on a round-the-world cricket tour, 90 matches in six months, most of them in England. We ended up in Rome, not to play cricket but to relax. A friend in the team got me along to the Baths of Caracalla, to see *Aida*. We sat in the open air on chairs – and there were elephants! Surely they can't do opera like this all the time, I thought. And I was hooked.

When I got home I bought up Joan Sutherland recordings on LPs and cassettes. She gave an Australian identity to opera that we hadn't had since the days of Nellie Melba. Then one day I bought a Decca opera compilation, and it was Renata Tebaldi who hit me, singing 'Che gelida manina': I had to play it again and again. Jussi Björling also got to me: he didn't have the robust quality of other tenors. These days I'm a subscriber to the Opera Australia season myself, and I've seen the soprano Nicole Car sing a lot of roles at the Sydney Opera House. In the '90s I discovered the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and their director Paul Dyer, and I became a supporter of them. That's how I heard Andreas Scholl for the first time: what an extraordinary voice!

I trained my own voice, as a singer does, by listening to it, and working on it. I was doing Test cricket by the age of 26, having begun working at the ABC when I was 22. My mentor was Gordon Scott: he used to work on emphasis and breathing from the diaphragm, just as singers do. And I had some benefit from the fact that I had my adenoids removed when I was very young. So I've never been a nasal broadcaster, though that's quite common. I also learnt a lot from Alan McGilvray, sitting at the back of the commentary box while he was calling the game. 'Copy technique, not style,' he told me. 'Make your own style.' It was the Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies who told McGilvray: 'When you are broadcasting, the most important thing is – pause.'



THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Mozart Symphony No 41, 'Jupiter'

Concertgebouw Orch / Böhm DG

It's the ordered structure of this symphony that grips me, and the sense of purposeful flow, like Michael Holding running in to bowl.



If done well, cricket commentary has an intimacy with the audience, like a good musical performance. You're there for some time, and there's an unwritten production happening in front of you. It's like a thriller, and you're not sure how it will end up, if it's a good game. A lot of people don't understand a thing about cricket, but it's a friend on the radio. Music is the same. When I listen to Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, I can anticipate what's coming, but it feels different every time – and that's how it is with someone like Steve Smith batting. He's fiddling at the crease, but he gets into a rhythm when he bats which is akin to musical performance. He goes into periods when he doesn't play shots at all, because the bowlers are trying to tease him out. He's worked out that most of the time he'll win the battle, and he has the skill and the patience to time his own period of dominance, once the bowler is tired, and he can explode into form. You can sense an instinctual life force and need to communicate in both great batting and musical performance. David Warner's bat is an instrument and an extension of his body no less than the piano is for Alfred Brendel. **G**

On BBC Test Match Special and ABC Grandstand, Jim Maxwell is a leading member of commentary teams for the Ashes, which runs until September 8

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Sat 28.09.19
20:00

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Franz Schubert and Ludwig Spohr

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Fri 29.11.19
20:00

Russian triptych | Piano: Anna Vinnitskaya

Rimsky-Korsakov is flanked by Rachmaninov and Prokofiev in a breathtaking anthology, that promises to deliver on fireworks and intense coloring.

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Beethoven: vigorously vocal | Choir: Kammerchor Dresden

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